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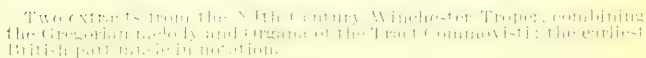
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# THE STORY OF BRITISH MUSIC AND THE EARLIER FRENCH MUSICIANS

By  
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and  
Mary Hargrave



THE SIGN OF A GOOD BOOK

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TO MY SON  
ANTROBUS TAFT HARRIS

Bachelor of Music of the University  
of Edinburgh; Second-Lieutenant,  
4th Bedfordshire Regiment; Killed  
in Action at Armentières, March  
19th, 1916.



## PREFACE

THAT everyone should be familiar with the history of his own country is axiomatic. But national chronicles have too often been written as though mankind had no other employment than putting kings on thrones and hurling them off, and life could be fully expressed in genealogical tables, dates, and pictures of battles.

To this anomaly there falls to be added the further one that the oldest of arts, leastways the first mentioned in the Hebrew Scriptures, has been the most neglected. Even chroniclers who have dealt with the industries, plastic arts, and literature of a nation have wholly passed over its music. Thus Henry Hallam could write on "The State of Europe during the Middle Ages" (1818), that is to say on the countries and the period which saw the birth of harmony (more strictly, of counterpoint), the gradual growth of our modern orchestra, and the evolution of "the only universal language" (musical notation), and blot his last page without having used a nib full of ink on these events! Much the same may be said of Lord Macaulay writing thirty years later: in the third chapter of his *History of England* he deals in particular with the arts and science of the seventeenth century, yet never even mentions Henry Purcell, who towards the end of that era

was the greatest composer in the world. Moreover he was the composer, or adapter, of one of the politically most influential tunes in the world's history, namely, "Lilliburlero," by which, to quote another writer, "a prince was sung out of three kingdoms." One frequently hears the tune to-day : who can repeat the words ?

Happily, however, signs are not wanting that this myopic view of the conditions under which nations exist is passing. The voluminous and philosophical Irish historian of England, Mr. E. H. Lecky ; the Oxford professor, Mr. C. A. Fyffe, who in his three-volume *History of Modern Europe* (1891) finds room for mention of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven ; and the Scotsman, Dr. John Macintosh, who deals with the subject in each of the four volumes of his *History of Civilisation in Scotland*, may perhaps claim to be the first British writers who recognise music as an important thread in the web and woof of human life. Mention must also be made of the awakening of our scholastic authorities to the high educational value of music, a quality much insisted on by the Greeks ; of our medical men to music as a therapeutic agent, especially in mental cases and shell-shock, wherein they, too, are but following up a line of thought suggested by Hellenic writers, particularly Pythagoras and Xenocrates ; of our civic fathers and military men to the recreative value of the art—organs

being found in every town-hall, bands in every park, books on music and musical scores in every municipal library, and concerts being provided in the rest-camps during the present war to an extent unheard of in the world's history. Strangest, perhaps, of all, and certainly the most recent discovery in the oldest of arts, an American teacher of aviation declares that musical proficiency is a great help in learning to fly !

But it must be confessed that if our leaders of thought and men of action, and countless singers, players, and listeners, know but little of the longest musical story in the world—that of our own school of composition—the fault cannot wholly be laid at their own door. For despite much musico-literary activity in recent years, there has hitherto been no record of the course which musical evolution has followed in our own country likely to attract the attention and meet the needs of the general reader.

Hence the present volume—less a history than a story of British music on its social and more human side.





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PART I.

SOCIAL

CHAPTER I

THE MUSIC OF NATURE IN GREAT BRITAIN.

THE story of a nation's music has no known beginning : it can never be traced to a prelude note ; like a fairy-tale it must begin with the time-honoured but unsatisfying formula "Once upon a time." For by however early a door we enter the temple of Apollo we are late comers : the music has already begun, nay, has never ceased during ages which stretch into so distant a past as to be beyond all human calculation.

The idea that man learnt his music from the birds is so natural a one—whether literally true or not—that classical literature had reached no great age before such a derivation was at least hinted at. That brilliant pantomime by the greatest of Attic, and perhaps of all comedians, Aristophanes' "The Birds," written over four hundred years before Christ, may be cited in this connection. For the two human fugitives who reach the feathered kingdom admit the pre-eminence of the birds in every sphere of human activity ; and poets, if not musicians, are

expressly mentioned among those who enter Cloud-cuckoo-town, and are afterwards ejected. And some three hundred and fifty years later Lucretius in his poem "On the Nature of Things" expresses the idea quite definitely :

"There was a time when men did imitate with their lips the birds' clear notes long before they could accompany flowing songs with melody, and delight the ears." (Lib. V. Line 1378).

The earliest Christian writer on the subject appears to have been the German Jesuit Athanasius Kircher, who treats it, with notational examples, in his *Musurgia Universalis* published at Rome in 1590. What appears to have been the next work also appeared in Italy, namely *Omnia Opera* by P. Gassendo, Florence, 1727. The great interest which American writers have taken in the subject also began early, but the first instance, Le Page du Pratz' *History of Louisiana*, 1763, was published in London. Among later books it is pleasant to find British writers taking an early and foremost place. Chief among them stands the Hon. Daines Barrington. He was one of the many gifted amateurs to whom music owes so much, and member of a profession more of whose members have become eminent in the art than of any other profession, except the clerical order—namely, the Law. Born in London in 1727 Barrington ultimately became a Judge on the

Welsh circuit, and afterwards at Chester. He wrote on legal subjects; on the possibility of reaching the North Pole; on musical prodigies—comparing Mozart with our own Crotch, Samuel and Charles Wesley and Lord Mornington; and on “Experiments and Observations on the Singing of Birds.” This latter book came out in 1775 and is still a leading authority. Not many musical historians have recognised the important bearing of the subject on the origin of the tonal art, but Sir John Hawkins’ monumental History published in London in 1775 may be named as an exception since he gives examples of bird songs, e.g. the following :

BLACKBIRD.



A later British writer, Mr. F. J. Crowest, very aptly regards the subject as integral to the argument of his book on “Musical Groundwork.” “The growth of melody,” he says, “has been clear and natural enough. Nature laid the foundation when Sound first broke out in its thousand shades and colourings, from the grateful hum of bees to the terrific roar of monster

ocean. It is this world of sound—Nature's great diapason—which we draw upon when moulding into shape the nursery lullaby, or the operatic scena, which commands the admiration of patrician and plebeian alike. . . . The first cravings of primitive man were towards an imitation of the sounds of life around him. In this way the Kamtschatkales have this succession of notes,



not from any musical system, but by imitating the cry of the wild duck. The moanings of man and beast doubtless led to the first funeral chants, such as the Egyptian *Maneros*, called by the Greeks *Linos*, and reputed the oldest music in the world."

While the greater part of bird music does not lie within our scale system, more of it does than is generally recognised. Mr. Simeon Pease Cheney, an American writer, in his "*Wood Notes Wild*" gives many instances. Here we have space for only one or two typical cases of the song of British birds. Over the house in which these lines are being written, a bird flew

on July 15, 1916, whose song I promptly noted down with metronome pace, as follows :



Many similar instances, in a large proportion of which the major common chord was prominent, were given in a correspondence in *Musical News* at the same time—July, 1916.

It is not, of course, necessary to its bearing on musical history that bird-song should be proved to include human scale formulæ. The influences under which music is composed are much more subtle than that. Birds do not speak in human word-formulas : yet the influence of bird-song on poetry is everywhere apparent. Witness Charles Kingsley, who declared in his article on “A Charm of Birds” in *Fraser’s Magazine*, June, 1867, that it was the feathered songsters who set the keynote for the songs of the old poets, and that the mediæval bards, of whom we shall have much to say, borrowed largely from them.

To us Britons the influence of bird-song on human music is of special interest since “the vocal and instrumental music of birds can be studied



in Great Britain perhaps to greater advantage than anywhere else in the world.”<sup>1</sup>

By “instrumental music,” it may be explained, ornithologists mean such sounds as the peculiar “bleating” or “drumming” of the British snipe, and the “sharp note not unlike the crack of a whip” of the American manakin, as distinct from a melodious utterance.

This richness of bird-song would seem to be enjoyed not only by Great Britain but by one of her great over-seas Dominions. A German traveller in Australia in a letter to his brother at home declares that the grandest concerts of feathered singers are to be heard in the clime from which he writes; and that the German birds, in comparison with the Australian singers, are mere bunglers (*Stumper*).<sup>2</sup> The same paucity of bird music apparently obtains in Denmark, for Dr. Gainborg published a book there in 1800, under the titular question “How can we improve the Song of our Wild Birds?” In Great Britain we don’t need to give lessons in voice production

<sup>1</sup>W. P. Pycraft, “The Story of Bird Life” p.89.

<sup>2</sup> See D. H. Beekle’s “Music of the Bird,” in “Die Gartelnhaube” for 1887. The “Guide to the Australian Museum” (Sidney: 1890: p. 55) bears similar testimony. “In the Australian Bush, what is more pleasant than to listen in the early morning to the flute-like notes of the piping Crowshrike (*Gymnarbrina tibicen*) and the rich and varied natural notes of the Lyre Bird (*Menura superba*), far excelling those of the Song-thrush and having immense powers of mimicry and catriloquism.”

to our skylarks, black-caps or thrushes, and the greatest compliment we could pay Jenny Lind was to call her the Swedish Nightingale.

Mr. Ward Fowler tells us that "the singing apparatus of a bird . . . where it is perfect, is a legitimate musical instrument," the product being what Mr. Pycraft terms "a true musical sound," produced in all birds "on the same principle as in the oboe."

It is not melody only which man may have learnt from the birds, but rhythm and the whole principle underlying concerted music, double choirs and antiphony. I have noted the following as the rhythm of the corncrake's cry:



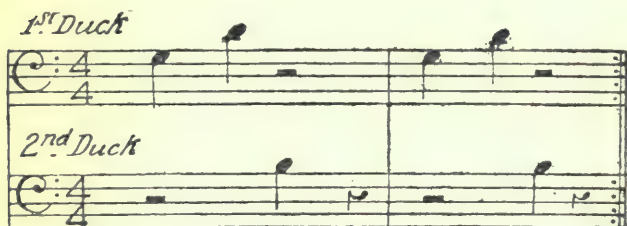
A feeling for harmonic effects is suggested by the predominance in bird music of the arpeggios on the common chord, and of consonant intervals. The third and fifth, the intervals formed by this chord, have been estimated to form respectively twenty-six and twenty-seven per cent. of intervals sung by birds, while fourths and octaves form twenty-five and nine per cent. respectively.<sup>1</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> See the late Mr. Nemo Clark's "Animal Music: Its Nature and Origin," in the *American Naturalist* for April 1879.

reader will shortly have pointed out to him the pride with which the human musicians of the "West Country" in Great Britain claim to have discovered the invaluable interval known as a "third." But if our musical colleagues of the sky and the trees recognise our emotions they might well add a laugh to their forms of utterance. For as some nameless magazine writer pointed out, the cuckoo's song alone is sufficient to account for this interval: "Here again the Big-wigs of harmony have written volumes in search of the origin and foundation of the minor scale when they might have found it in every copse." The idea is good, and well put, despite a serious mistake on the anonymous writer's part in saying that the cuckoo's interval is always a minor third: it varies with the time of year and the climate, and is often a major third and sometimes a fourth.

When boating on a Scottish loch I once heard the following little duet quacked by two ducks—or rather, more probably a duck and drake in an amatory mood. The repetition of the phrase time and time again precluded the idea of a mere accidental coincidence in either the harmonic relationship or rhythm. Unfortunately I made

no note of the key and can only give it approximately from memory :



If a chorus of birds, such as every one of us has frequently heard, does not produce a chord reducible to human musical notation, it is certainly not a mere unison ; it is harmonic in effect. And not only do birds sing in chorus, but one chorus answers another : Mr. Hudson relates how once he “heard flock after flock take up their song round the entire circuit of a certain lake, each flock *waiting its turn to sing* and only stopping when its duty had been performed.” (Italics mine). This was in America, but Moses and Miriam evidently enjoyed no monopoly in their antiphonal singing, and our good old English Tallis was not alone in the essential idea underlying his motet in forty parts !

“Our music,” we are told by Mr. Pycraft, “has been and doubtless often is inspired by that of the birds.” The first example of conscious

imitation which I can find is British. Christopher Simpson, or Sympson, was born about 1610 and was originally a soldier in the Army raised by the Duke of Newcastle for the Service of Charles I. His name has come down to us, however, owing to his achievements as a composer, writer on music, and player on the viol. It is in a song with viol accompaniment that the quaint imitation of the cuckoo's notes occur which occasions this reference to him. Handel in his organ concertos, and Beethoven in the slow movement of his Pastoral symphony and in the famous opening notes of the symphony in C minor (thought to have been suggested by the song of the yellow-hammer), were but copying at a distance of about seventy-five years, and a hundred and sixty years, respectively, a device originated by this English music-maker of the early seventeenth century !

The subject tempts one to a more lengthy discussion than we have space for here, and we must end it even at the expense of an abrupt close. The more so as even absolute proof that man learnt his song from the birds would not nullify the statement with which this book opens. For in this case, where did the birds get their music from ? Mr. Cheney believes that they developed it gradually as we have done ours :

and he sketches out the course which he thinks this evolution probably followed. The present writer agrees with him, and this is as far back as we can carry even a problematical origin.

## CHAPTER II

### THE MUSIC OF MYTH AND LEGEND :

#### BARDS AND SCALDS.

WE have spoken of the impossibility of tracing music to its beginnings. Yet human forms can hardly be recognised moving through the mists of the remote past before a musician is discernible among them. Not only so, but we can finger and handle the veritable instruments on which he played ! Near Reading there was found among some flint instruments a small oval stone with a hole in : it is probably a sponge petrification, the hole being where the sponge had been attached ; when the hole is blown over it emits a loud whistle, and the “ find ” is probably a musical instrument of the Stone Age. In the Dorset County Museum is a small bone exhibit labelled “ pipe ” ; 1½ inch long ; exterior diam.  $\frac{5}{8}$  inch ; bored throughout and with a hole in the centre of the length ; it was found in a Barrow and is probably a Celtic whistle of the Bronze Age. Several metal horns, curved like those of an animal, found in Scotland and elsewhere, are probably of the same period.

Among the Celtic races there were three orders of Druids, distinguished by the colour of their robes ; and one of these, who wore a blue robe, were the poet-musicians or bards ; the others were white-robed priests, and green-robed ovates. Caius, the historian, believed that the Druids originated in Britain in the year 1013 B.C. A somewhat earlier date is given by another writer unnamed (I infer that it was Wace, author of a metrical account of Brutus). He says Britain takes its name from Prydain, son of Aidd Mawr, in the days of whose son, Dyfnwal, recognition was made of three primeval bards of Britain. Also that Plennyd enjoys the reputation of having been bard, that is singer or narratory chanter, to King Brutus, 1149 B.C. A Welsh author, without naming any particular year or century, is in general agreement with these estimates, claiming a Druidical origin, and between two and three thousand years of age, for the tune *Nos Galen*. And as regards the antiquity of the Cambrian race another writer goes even further and claims that the Welsh population contains elements which are pre-Celtic and probably pre-Aryan : this means that her people have a strain of continuity with those primitive human beings, akin to the Finns and American Indians, who shared the jungle of Europe with



animal occupants of somewhat alarming aspect!

The Irish of the present day are merely the last of a number of invaders of that erstwhile glorious but now distressful Isle, and content themselves with claiming descent from the Milesians—a group of Greek colonisers.

Mr. John Gunn in his “The Harp in the Highlands of Scotland,” published at Edinburgh in 1807, claims that the harp was known as early in Caledonia as in Ireland, and the present writer agrees with him. As evidence he quotes a poem of Bas Oisiain, as given in Kennedy’s Collection, which literally translated stands thus :

Where many were our cruits and harps  
And many were the bards to sing the tale,  
Many a shell went round,  
Many were the new songs which were sung together.

To prove his point it is necessary to show that this and other poems he quotes were of Pictish or British, and not Irish-Scots origin. This the intended doing, but death intervened. Late writers, however, to be quoted in Part II of this book, have established what is practically the same point. Anyway, whether it be through the invasion of Argyll-shire by the Scots from Ireland in the sixth century or not, Scottish music harks back into the dim recesses of Ossianic legend. Mr. Gunn’s

own opinion was evidently that it is more ancient still, for he regards the harp, and the practice of passing it round at banquets, as having been introduced by our Caledonian ancestors from Asia. And they are believed to have come between the time of Abraham and David.

Even more ambitious is the claim which the Anglo-Saxon makes for his music. The office which among the Celts was known as that of "Bard," was in Scandinavian countries called Scop, and afterwards "Scald," and after settlement in Britain, "Glee-man." The Scald held very high rank: the word means "polisher of language," and the Scalds, like the Hindoo musicians, attributed their art to divine origin—to Odin or Wodin.

The Beowulf poem, supposed to have been written about 520 A.D., refers to the Scalds as follows :

"The glee-wood (harp) was touched, and Hrothgar's gleemen, gladdeners of the hall, told of the works of Finn's offspring."

The bards and Scalds exercised the same functions among the Celtic and Saxon peoples that the Aoidoi did among the Greeks. They were the historians, poets and chroniclers of their time. "The Bards of the Celts celebrated the actions of illustrious men in heroic poems, which

they sung to the sweet sounds of the lyre," wrote Ammianus Marcellinus about 350 A.D. They incited armies to courage in the hour of battle, and by their heroic strains aroused the fury and valour of the warriors. Many melodies now turned to peaceful uses, Irish melodies perhaps especially, are believed to have been originally war songs and marches. In time of peace the bards were the ambassadors, heralds, and depositaries of all historical tradition;<sup>1</sup> as heralds they were particularly conspicuous in Wales and Scotland. A Welshman's birthright depended upon his being able to trace his ancestry back for nine generations: and the bards committed these genealogies to memory. Much the same law would appear to have obtained north of the Tweed, for at the first Scottish coronation of which we possess any details, that of Alexander II, 1249, a Highland bard, dressed in a scarlet tunic, repeated on his knees, in Gaelic, the genealogy of the king and his ancestors up to Fergus, first King of Scotland. Laws and religious principles were committed to memory and recited in a similar manner. The status of the poet-musicians was very high: in Wales the chief bard was

<sup>1</sup> Miss Vera Holmes, who was with Dr. Elsie Inglis in Serbia, on hospital work, tells me that in that sorely stricken country bards are still in existence, and that the remarkable knowledge which the Serbs have of their own history is mainly due to the singing by the bards of interminable rhymed chronicles.

eighth in social order from the Prince ; their emoluments were considerable, and the office was often hereditary. In Wales and Ireland they were supposed to be able to read the future, and their political influence was very great. Hence the alleged endeavour (disputed by some writers) of Edward I. in 1284 to exterminate those in Wales, an effort emulated by Scotland some two hundred years later, when laws were enacted against the bards and they were classed with beggars and vagabonds. In both countries these efforts at suppression were only partially successful : especially in Cambria, where the bards were held in higher veneration and for a longer period than anywhere else. In all three Celtic countries they did more than any other class to preserve the traditional music, but in Wales they brought it further forward than in either Ireland or Scotland. For one of their functions was the singing of impromptu verses, in some cases to impromptu tunes, and this practice, known as " Penillion singing," is still in existence and is one of the most characteristic features of Welsh musical life. Thackeray, it will be remembered, introduces it in the first chapter of *The Newcomes*.

Though the earliest figures of bards on the stage of history are shadowy, tradition gives them

personal names as far back as the time when S. John was writing his Gospel. Edward Jones, a harper who was Welsh bard to the Prince of Wales in 1783, published in the next year a work called "Musical and Poetical Relicks of the Welsh Bards, preserved by tradition and authentic manuscripts from very remote antiquity." And in this he gives, as other writers have done, lengthy lists of bards dating from A.D. 60, translations of their songs, prose narratives, and musical laws and rules for the government of their order, "preserved by tradition and authentic manuscripts from very remote antiquity." Jones has been charged by an English critic with stating "intimate matters" concerning the Druids with "little reserve." But it is to be remembered that the relative value attached by the Druids to oral and written means of transmission was precisely the reverse of our own. They were acquainted with Greek letters and occasionally used them, but they made an art of preservation and transmission by the living voice, and that which it was their special function to pass on to countless generations they would trust to nothing else. Tradition which is really bardic is probably true.

The Irish bards were divided into three classes, one of which sang the sacred and heroic songs, and were employed as heralds and councillors; the

second recited and expounded the laws ; while the third were the chroniclers and recorders.

The most famous bardic legend is, of course, that of King Arthur, to be found in lays of the sixth and seventh centuries. All Celtic countries possess versions of it—Arthur's Seat in Edinburgh is named after the famous monarch of the Round Table. But Wales claims a special interest, particularly for musicians, owing to certain tunes to be found in Welsh manuscripts which are said to have been performed at King Arthur's Court. The evidence for them is as follows :

The beginnings of the Eisteddfodaw, or "Sittings of learned men," are said to date from only a century later than the sittings round King Arthur's famous Table. Some writers say these meetings were of Irish origin, but most regard them as Welsh. Mention is made of one in Wales in the seventh century at which King Cadwaladr presided. They were triennial and usually held at Aberffraw, the royal seat of the Prince of North Wales ; at Dynevor in South Wales ; and at Mathravel in Merionethshire. Their purpose was the regulation of poetry and music ; the conferring of degrees ; and the electing of a Chief Bard. Candidates for degrees had to pass a novitiate of three years, and to study for other periods of three years before

taking the three higher grades. An important meeting took place in 940 A.D., when King Howel Dha fixed the privileges of the bards. A century and a half or so later a much more important event of the same character took place. Prince Gruffydd ab Cynan convened a great meeting of Welsh bards, and invited thereto a deputation of Irish bards, whose reputation at this period was the highest of all. Laws were made for the guidance and governance of bards, harpers and other musicians, and the council enacted that certain "measures" should be played to particular kinds of lyrics, and names were given to them. This Congress of about 1090 A.D. formed perhaps the greatest epoch in the history of bardism, and its decisions were quoted as authoritative for centuries. Thus at a great Eisteddiod held nearly five hundred years later in 1567, by order of Queen Elizabeth, the Chief Bard, William Penllyn, made it his business to commit to writing the traditions of his own day as to what had been the findings of the great congress under Gruffydd ab Cynan. No copy of Penllyn's manuscript is known to exist. But in the reign of Charles I. a book "was written by Robert ap Huw of Bodwigan in Anglesey," to quote an early entry in the volume, and "some part of it was copied out of William Penllyn's book." Ap Huw's manuscript



purports to contain "the music of the ancient Britons as settled by a congress of the masters of music by order of Gruffydd ab Cynan, Prince of Wales, about the year 1100, with some of the most ancient pieces of the Britons, supposed to have been handed down to us from the British Druids." The pieces referred to consist of twenty-four lessons, or "measures," followed by twelve variations on a ground bass, that is, a short theme repeated in the bass while changing harmonies are put above it. This was a form of composition for which English composers of the period represented by Ap Huw's manuscript had a peculiar partiality and skill; but whether they derived it from Wales, or Wales from them, or each invented the device independently, is a question which seems to have escaped the attention of commentators.

The musical examples in Ap Huw's volume are given in "Tablature." This was a pictorial kind of notation consisting of lines, dots, curves and letters, which originated in the tenth century and was much used up to the end of the seventeenth for instrumental music. It varied greatly with different instruments and in Ap Huw's manuscript looks much like Chinese writing. The first of the following two renderings into modern notation is taken from Dr. Barney's History.



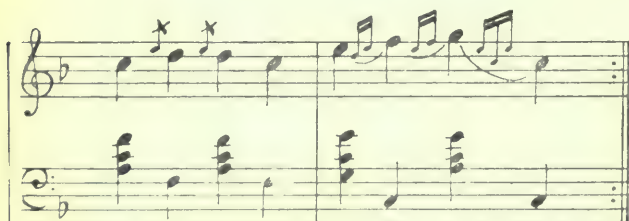
The second is from "The Prelude to the Salt," a theme and twenty-four variations for the harp which "used to be performed before the Knights of King Arthur when the salter was placed upon the board." The theme and one variation are here given, and for these I am indebted to the skill and courtesy of Miss Margaret H. Glyn, who, in connection with her book *The Evolution of Musical Form*, has made a close study of Ap Huw's manuscript.

#### ANCIENT BRITISH HARP MUSIC.



## THE PRELUDE TO THE SALT.

(Said to have been played at the Court of King Arthur.)

*Theme**Var. I*

The Irish and Scottish bards dealt very largely with Ossian and the traditions which surround his name. The Rev. Patrick Macdonald, who collected Gaelic folk-music between the years 1760—80, gives the following as the chant to which traditionally Ossian recited his Soliloquy on the death of all his contemporary heroes :

### OSSIAN'S CHANT.



Captain Fraser of Knockie, who published a large and important collection of Scottish airs in 1816, gives a longer and much more elaborate tune to which he says "Ossian is recited"; but his habitual modernization of old airs invalidates his claim to historical reliability.

The Anglo-Saxon glee-men harped much on Robin Hood and his Merry Men, concerning whom countless songs were written: but this was after the twelfth century, during which he is said to have lived.

Among the Highlands of Scotland there was

hardly a household among the chieftains which had not a Bard or Harper on its establishment. A piece of ground was allotted for his subsistence, which devolved to one of his descendants on condition of his being qualified to continue the office. In some cases, for instance in the island of Mull, this was known as "The Harper's Field," and it was always contiguous to the chieftain's residence. In the old castles of several Highland chieftains the Harper's seat is pointed out by the local guides, as the *Harper's window* at Duntullim castle, in the island of Skye, and the *Harper's gallery* at Castlelachlan in Argyllshire.

The high status and emoluments of the bards led in time to there being many impostors, and as early as 1315 a law was passed in England to suppress the evil and protect the properly qualified musicians. In 1450 a similar law was passed in Scotland, and in 1567 Queen Elizabeth appointed a Commission in Wales with a like purpose. As giving an instructive account of a state of affairs apt to be recurrent in all parts of the Kingdom this latter may be quoted :

"Vagrant and idle persons naming themselves Minstrels, Rymers, and Bards are lately grown into such intolerable multitude within the Principality of North Wales, that not only gentlemen and

others by their shameless disorders are often disquieted in their habitations, but also the expert minstrels and musicians in tonge and cunynge thereby much discouraged to travaile in the exercise and practice of their knowledge," and so forth. It was therefore enacted that annual assemblies should be held at which a silver harp should be awarded to the best musician on the advice of "expert men in the faculty of Welsh music," and that all adjudged unfit should be compelled to "return to honest labour" upon pain of being taken as "sturdy and idle vagabonds." Happy Wales! It will be seen that diploma examinations and registration of teachers are no new ideas.

Gradually the various functions of the bards developed into separate professions; the Order deteriorated, and the later legislation was prohibitive rather than protective. In Ireland the last bard is said to have appeared in 1690 at the battle of the Boyne; in Scotland the last recorded payment to a bard was that made to Murdoch Macdonald, Harper to the family of Coll, in 1734: a formal ending to the Order is seen by one authority in the Act against Hereditary Jurisdictions passed in 1748. Nevertheless Dr. Johnson in his *Tour of the Hebrides* in 1773 mentions O'Kane, Harper to Lord Macdonald. In Eng-

land the Anglo-Saxon glee-man became known after the Norman Conquest as a minstrel ; his function was somewhat different from that of a Celtic bard, and is dealt with elsewhere in this book, but his end was much the same. In Wales the bard still exists, though in name rather than in fact, rarely appearing except at an Eisteddfod.

## CHAPTER III

### FOLK-MUSIC : GENERAL.

THE only way by which we can begin the study of national music without doing violence to its continuity is by starting, not at any particular period of time, but at the permanent well-spring of musical inspiration flowing, though in very varying degrees, at all times—namely folk-music.

What then is folk-music ? It is all music which appeals to the deep and constant elements in human nature sufficiently to make it permanent in its hold ; which is simple enough to be understood by all who have ears to hear ; and which contains some element of feeling or construction characteristic of a locality.

The reader fortunate enough to be familiar with Mr. Cecil J. Sharp's admirable book on English Folk Song will see that I am unable to accept his definition of folk-music. He would make it depend not on general and permanent acceptance, but origin ; and this would exclude a great part of the airs most familiar to all classes of the people for centuries past.

Of these conditions permanence is the most vital. The song which was sung, whistled, hummed

and its rhythm beaten as a Devil's Tattoo by the greatest number of people at one time, was probably some topical pantomime ditty. But such tunes are not folk-music, for the rapidity with which they achieve popularity is not more remarkable than that with which they sink into oblivion. Of this *Tipperary* is a recent and striking instance. Even classical music cannot claim this quality of permanence to the extent which folk-song can. For that which distinguishes the one from the other is technique: and technique constantly alters. The clavier music of the Elizabethan composers, Byrd, Bull and Gibbons, showed one of the most startling developments in the technique of composition which a historian can cite. Yet these pieces, the classics of their own time and many a long day after, are now heard only at historical recitals; and this while the songs of the same period—for instance, *The British Grenadiers* and *Now is the month of Maying*—are as much to people's liking in the present day as they ever were. The simplicity necessary to folk-music is of course a relative quality, depending on the musical capacity of a nation. A melody composed in A.D. 814 on the death of Charlemagne, or composed earlier and adapted to this purpose, contains a hundred and fifty-one consecutive sounds—



a great length for that period—yet with two exceptions it is wholly composed of three notes. This limited compass is characteristic of Gallic melodies. On the other hand, British folk-song is remarkable for its extended compass : a range of eleven notes and wide skips are very common, especially among the Celtic races.

It is not necessary to folk-music, as some people seem to think, that it should be by an unknown composer—much is, and much is not. Nor that the composer should be an untutored musician, though he or she may be ; the highly characteristic example *Rule Britannia* was composed by one of the most accomplished musicians of the eighteenth century, Dr. Arne, and moreover occurred in an example of one of the most artificial, and some say unnatural, forms on which music is cast, namely opera. The melody to which Burns wrote *Auld Lang Syne* was written by one of the best of the English opera composers, William Shield, being part of the Overture to his *Rosina*, 1782. This is one of the many examples of a melody composed in one country becoming more popular in another. The song with which a prima donna knows she can best please an English audience when responding to an encore, *Home Sweet Home*, was the work of Sir Henry Bishop, a leading composer of his day. It is a question not

of origin but of character : *Heart of Oak*, to give another instance, is none the less popular from its having been composed by an erudite ecclesiastical musician, Dr. Boyce ; or through having first appeared in the most fleeting of all forms, that of a topical pantomime song. Age, again, is only a factor in the making of folk-song to the extent that sufficient time must have elapsed to prove the permanence of the hold an air has on a people. Folk-music is always being evolved. If the writer dared be rash enough to assume the mantle of a prophet, he would predict that not many generations will need to have passed before Sir Villiers Stanford's *Land of Hope and Glory* will have assumed the character of folk-song ; indeed there are not wanting signs that it has done so already.

Social and psychological considerations are not the only ones which place folk-music first among the subjects demanding a historian's consideration. The technical side of music demands it equally. For there is scarcely an element in even the most elaborate and most modern forms of composition which cannot be traced to some germ in primitive song or dance. Thus the two-theme character of what is known as Binary or First-movement Form is probably a development of the two four-bar phrases of which so many early dances are

found to consist, often with a repeat at the end of each phrase ; while Dr. Grattan Flood points out that Ternary or Rondo Form is clearly traceable to certain Irish dances.

Folk-music takes only these two forms of song and dance. Some authorities regard dancing as having preceded singing in the course of human evolution ; and that among primitive peoples singing took place only as an accompaniment to dancing. A large proportion of early tunes were used for both purposes, but this does not determine the question of priority. Be this as it may, song is of much greater importance as an embodiment of national characteristics than the dance. Words may embrace any and every phase of human activity and feeling. Thus almost every primary civil occupation has songs proper to it ; milking and weaving songs are specially common. Ireland has its ploughing songs as well ; and Scotland its *Luinig*, a choral song sung at all kinds of work, mostly by women, and chiefly to extemporary verses, like the Welsh *Penillion* singing ; and its *Jorram*, a Highland boating song ; and England, nation of sailors, its sea chanties. The dance, though more widely expressive than is generally realised, is much more restricted. On the other hand, those very words which give to a song such an unlimited range of expression in its own

country, retard its introduction to another. The dance has no such handicap: and we shall find that dance tunes are much more cosmopolitan than are songs. Hence, while dealing with the ballads of England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland separately, most of the dance music will fall more conveniently into chapters reviewing British music as a whole.

When one takes the course of human evolution throughout the world under review, nothing is more striking than the regularity with which races have risen, come to a zenith, and then fallen out of the race, to be followed over the same course by others. The music of a nation is no exception to this rule. And it is not wholly idle to ask which among Western nations was the first to acquire a reputation among its neighbours for its music? To this question most historians would reply France, or rather Paris. But this is because they measure a nation almost entirely by the achievements of its academic musicians; and Paris was the first centre to acquire a reputation for musical attainments of the scholastic sort, which it did in the twelfth century. But nations enjoyed a high degree of musical activity, and differed widely in the character and degree of their musical attainments, centuries before the germs of composition, as we understand it, became

visible. The purely scholastic criterion is arbitrary, narrow and misleading. Turning, then, to the natural and spontaneous output of the musical impulse, folk-song, what will the answer be? Anyone who had to make a guess would probably and very naturally say "The Land of Song—Italy." Nevertheless he would be wrong. Rome and Milan were a well-spring of ecclesiastical song, but not of folk-music. The Italians regarded their language as unsuited for poetry and music till Dante taught them better! The only tongue thought fit for song was that of Provence, whence sprang the Troubadours. These royal and noble poet-musicians were the first as a body to acquire great fame for secular song, but they were not strictly a national body, and their lyrics were of the order of art-song rather than folk-song. One of the British Isles—*which* will appear later—was the first nation to win a European fame for both its ecclesiastical musicians and its folk-song.

## CHAPTER IV

FOLK-MUSIC: IRISH, WELSH, SCOTTISH, ENGLISH.

PROBABLY owing to a more intimate relation with older and Eastern countries, civilization reached a high level in Ireland earlier than in other parts of Great Britain. It was from the Emerald Isle that Wales, Scotland, England, France and Germany received a great stimulus to their education in music. Irish monks educated S. Aldhelm, the first Englishman to become celebrated as a musician, and S. Dunstan, who was even more famous. Their monasteries at Pavia in Italy (founded 800 A.D.), Angoulême (876), Vaussor (950), Metz (965), Verdun (995), Wurzburg (1033), Erfurt (1050), Fulda (1058), Ratisbon (1067), Roth (1073), and at other centres, had a considerable effect on Continental musical art during the tenth and eleventh centuries. This is amply evidenced by the manuscripts still surviving at St. Gall. Even Dante admits that the Italians got the harp from Ireland; and it is well known that the harp has been emblazoned on the arms of Ireland since the thirteenth century.

Nor did the monks concern themselves with church music only, as we shall see more than once in these pages. History affords many examples of the close relationship between sacred and secular song. Perhaps the earliest example is that of an Irish monk of St. Gall in Switzerland (founded by an Irishman in 646 A.D.), who in 840 A.D. was at work in the scriptorium when a merle (blackbird) sang and he paused to write down these verses in the margin of his manuscript.

THE BLACKBIRD'S SONG 840 A.D.

Great woods gird me, now around  
 With sweet sound merle sings to me :  
 My much-lined pages over  
 Sings its lover minstrelsy.  
 Swift it sings its measured song,  
 Hid among the tree-tops green :  
 My God on high thus love me,  
 Thus approve me, all unseen.

So came to be written the earliest known secular song by a British writer ! The words were found by Cavaliere Nigra, and published by him at Florence in his *Reliquia Celtichi* in 1872. The translation from the Irish tongue is by Dr. Sigerson ; and for this and much other information on Irish matters in these pages the present writer is indebted to Dr. W. H. Grattan Flood.

For centuries Irish folk-songs were famous throughout Europe. Dr. Ernest Walker in his

*History of Music in England* declares that "Irish folk-music is, on the whole, the finest that exists. . . . It is unsurpassed in poetical and artistic charm . . . for sheer beauty of melody, the works of Mozart, Schubert, and the Irish folk-composers, form a triad that is unchallenged throughout the whole range of art. . . . Few musicians have been found to question the assertion that Irish folk-music is, on the whole, the finest that exists ; it ranges with wonderful ease over the whole gamut of human emotion from the cradle to the battlefield, and is unsurpassed in poetical and artistic charm. If musical composition meant nothing more than tunes sixteen bars long, Ireland could claim some of the greatest composers who have ever lived ; for in their miniature form the best Irish folk-tunes are gems of absolutely flawless lustre."

Sir Hubert Parry uses words remarkably similar to those of Dr. Walker. He describes Irish music as "probably the most human, most varied, most poetical and most imaginative in the world" ; it is particularly rich in tunes which imply "considerable sympathetic sensitiveness," and he adds that "the Anglo-Saxon Border music is not far behind." Sir Hubert quotes the tune *Danny Boy* as a remarkable example of an accumulation of crises rising higher and higher, declaring



that "within the limits of a folk-tune it is hardly possible to deal with the successive crises more effectively."

National character in dances is much less defined, or at least much less confined to the country of its origin, than is the case with songs, for reasons already given. But the Planxty, or Lament, may be appropriately mentioned here as being peculiar to the Irish and Welsh harpers ; it was a dance in six-eight time, with strains of an unequal number of bars. Its character was not so doleful as the name would seem to imply. The dance with which Ireland is more associated than with any other is the Jig. Italy claims its origin, and so does Spain ; but the Irishman has made it his own and can content himself with no fewer than four forms of it.

The march is not, of course, a dance : but this seems the most convenient place in which to remark on the peculiarities of the Irish march : namely, its six-eight time, which, though not unique, is unusual in marches ; and its quick pace. In this latter it was in specially sharp contrast with the English march, which was slower than most.\* In turning to the music of Wales one is at once struck by the sharp contrast between the extreme antiquity claimed for its folk-song and the modern character of the tunes themselves.

\* See page 168.

But this is no disproof of the truth of such claim, for the Ionian scale, which corresponds with our modern major mode, though held taboo by the church, which called it *modus lascivus*, is as ancient as those more severe ones which ecclesiastics favoured. Sir Frederick Ouseley attributed "the originality and tunefulness of the ancient Welsh melodies" to folk-music having been "the spontaneous, and I might say instinctive, growth of musical inspiration unfettered by arbitrary and false analogies, and trusting for guidance only to an unspoilt musical ear." The fine tune *Britain's Lament* is in the Dorian mode. Other tunes unquestionably old from internal evidence are the lullaby *Suo Gan*—said to be of Druidical origin,—and the *Shepherd of Hafod*. But far fewer tunes are in the old modes, except the Ionian, than is the case with most folk-music. "The striking feature of British music," says Mr. F. J. Crowest, "was its indisputably indigenous character . . . . hospitality and warm affection were esteemed a virtue among the Britons and this quality reflected itself in the native music," which is characterised also by "wild flight and imagination . . . . we still recognise the same plaintive mood in these ancient vocal relics, the pent-up earnestness which are alike properties of our oldest Irish, Welsh and Scottish airs as well as of that music of the East

which . . . . . affected the artistic tendencies of Britain . . . . . How symmetrical in form and lovely in their stately evenness, too, are the Welsh melodies—almost without exception.”

Among the most characteristic Welsh airs *The March of the Men of Harlech* may be taken to represent the robustness which springs from mountain airs ; and *The Rising of the Lark*, the sprightliness—a quality not entirely absent from *Nos Galen* despite its fabulous age. As typical of the beauty of sorrow in a character of great strength nothing finer could be cited than the slow minor airs, *Morva Rhuddlan* and *The Red Piper* ; while as exhibiting the beauty of tenderness and grace *Gwenith Glyn* and *The Blackbird* would not be easy to surpass in Wales or out of it. Triple measure and a fondness for *tempo rubato* verge on the frequency which makes things characteristic. The former will be found in *The Ash Grove*—which, however, is Welsh only by adoption ; the latter in *Adieu to dear Cambria* and *Weep not, I pray* ; and both features in *Why lingers my gaze*.

Welshmen were much given to dancing : one is therefore surprised to find no dance which one can confidently say is the national one. As already stated they shared the “Plaxty” or “Lament” with the Irish. They had their own distinctive

form of the Morris dance. Edward Jones in his book on Welsh Bards, 1808, gives a dance which he calls "Sibel," and which it has been suggested is a survival from the Druids ; but I can find no other reference to it. It is in common time and a feature of it is that there are no crescendos or diminuendos. Four bars *forte* alternate regularly with four bars *piano*, suggesting a solo for one dancer, after which a company of dancers joins in.

As regards instruments the harp was as common at one time, and as international, as pianos are now. Wales, however, continued using it longer, I think, than any other nation, and may therefore claim it as her national instrument. But the instrument in which Cambria may justly claim the most distinctive interest, though by no means an exclusive one, is the *crwyth* (pronounced *crooth*). It was also called "crowd." Its oldest form was probably identical with that of the Irish cruit, originally a small harp or lyre, plucked with the fingers, as was the Roman *fidicula*. Later on it had six strings, four of which were played with the bow—the importance of which fact will be commented on later—and two were pinched with the thumb of the left hand. The first known mention of it is by an Irish poet who is said to have flourished

before the Christian era. And it is included in a list of national instruments which occurs in some elegiacs written about 609 A.D. by Venantius Fortunatus, Bishop of Poitiers, much quoted by musical historians :

Romanusque lyra plaudat tibi, Barbarus harpa,  
Græcus achilliaca, *chrotta* Brittanna canat.

“ Chrotta ” was one of many forms of the name of the instrument ; another was hurdy-gurdy ; it was often mentioned and depicted in mediæval manuscripts, and delighted the ears of its devotees for two thousand years, for it was heard at Carnarvon as recently as 1801.

Scottish folk-music produces an impression precisely the reverse of that of Welsh music. In place of modernity one is struck with the highly original and old-world character of the tunes. Many of them are built on the pentatonic scale, as are the oldest and best of Chinese tunes—a scale outside both the Gregorian and modern diatonic modes. And when the whole seven notes of the normal system are employed it is in a way totally different from that of modern music, inasmuch as any note can be, and in different tunes is, used as the “ final.” It is largely due to this that the tunes have such a quaint and archaic allurements about them. The playing every night of the air “ *Soldier, lie down on your puckle* ”

*straw*," by way of "Lights Out," by the piper of a Highland regiment, stationed a stone's throw from where these lines are being written, at the beginning of the war, was one of the most memorable and haunting musical effects the writer has ever listened to. The Highland bards attributed their poems to Ossian : it is impossible not to believe that many of the tunes still in use are not at least developments of those to which these poems were originally sung. Yet the earliest specific date to which a song can be definitely assigned is that of *The Lament for Flodden*, 1513.

Mention has often been made of James I., 1395,—1437, who was distinguished as both poet and musician, and according to Tassoni "found out of himself a new kind of music, plaintive and mournful, differing from every other." That he improved Scottish music need not be doubted, but one cannot believe that its main characteristics are not of older date than that of his reign. There are many beautiful airs among the Highland folk-songs : they are simple and are sung "in a wild artless and irregular manner" with little or no impression of measure. All of which suggests a remote origin. The tunes *Gala Water*, *The Banks and Braes* and *O meikle thinks my love o' my beauty* show how beautiful a melody

may be written on five notes. They can all be played on only the black notes of a piano.

Perhaps the best testimony to the charm of Scottish folk-songs is the frequency with which concert singers respond to an encore by singing one of them ; and also the innumerable imitations which were composed by musicians south of the Tweed in Queen Anne's reign and later. Many of these were worthless, but quite a number gained currency and have received the honour of naturalization in Scottish Collections. *He rose and let me in ; Over the hills and far away ; De'il take the wars ; Sawney was tall (Corn rigs) ; In January last (Jock o' Hazeldean)* are instances. But as with Irish and Welsh songs, so with Scottish, it is not the populace only which is appreciative of its own music. No one is more keenly alive to the beauty of much folk-song than the highly trained musician. Space will not allow of a separate treatment of Highland and Lowland songs, and we take the former as the more characteristic. "The islands," wrote Mr. Ernest Newman lately, "seem to have produced some song writers to whom it is not at all extravagant to attribute genius. There are melodies among those songs that are as purely perfect as any melody could be ; Schumann and Hugo Wolf would have knelt and kissed the hands of the men



who conceived them. . . . . For sheer beauty of invention, sheer loveliness in the fall of the notes, some of these melodies are without their superiors whether in folk-song or art-song. Schubert himself never wrote a more perfectly satisfying or more haunting melody, for example, than that of *The Seagull of the Land-under-Waves*."

And Mrs. Kennedy-Fraser, who has devoted a life-time to the subject of Hebridean music, speaks of "rapturously reiving sea chantys that send the salt spray stinging in the face ; sinuously curving airs that seem to put the eye into the ear and depict birlinns and galleys on gently rocking summer seas ; processional refrain songs that lift you over many a weary mile without conscious effort, and labour lilts that virtually convert labour into hilarious pastime. And withal there are mystic chants with naught of what the outside world calls Celtic gloom, but which are filled rather with a golden glow of love and rapture and light. And passionate love songs there are, many of them the expression of woman's love. Woman seems to have taken a higher place in ancient heroic Celtic legend than in the Greek tales from which Homer derived inspiration. The passionate nature of the Hebridean woman's love-songs surely bespeaks therefore free scope of choice. Note Deirdre's frank, instantaneous expression



of love to Naoise at first sight.' "Of this aspect of Celtic life, no other race," says Renan, "has carried so much mystery into love. No other has conceived with more delicacy the ideal of woman, nor has been more dominated by her."

The foregoing conjecture as regards women composers is of special interest in the present day, and is confirmed by the tradition that Mary Macleod, an outstanding figure of the sixteenth-century period, "left the touch of her subtle artistry" on much Highland folk-song, though whether on words only or tunes as well is not certain.

It hardly needs to be added that the national dances of Scotland are the reel and the strathspey. Some think that Scotland derived the reel from Scandinavia, but it is just as likely to have been the other way about. Most people would say the national instrument now is the bagpipe, which superseded the harp during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and personally I should agree with them, despite an eminent authority, Mr. Kidson, who says it is the fiddle.

If anyone were doubtful as to national character being reflected in the music of a people, all he need do would be to compare the music of the Celtic races with that of the Anglo-Saxons. The English have none of the mysticism of the Gael, none of

that inveterate elusiveness which makes the Highlander never answer a question save by asking another—they are straightforward to bluntness. They are less poetical than the Celts, less romantic, and if we except the Scots, more practical. Above all they are cheery: they have none of the dreamy melancholy which finds so appropriate a setting alike in misty mountain and bleak uplands; no phrase is more aptly descriptive of natural character or has obtained a wider currency than that which speaks of “Merry England.”

And all this is reflected in the folk-music of England. It is, of course, composite, as the race itself is. It embodies many moods. There is, though very rarely, strong emotional expression as in *The poor soul sat sighing* and *Willow, Willow*; there is occasionally pathos as in *Ah, the sighs*; not infrequently one comes across a *naïve* wistfulness and gentle melodic charm as in *Pretty Polly Oliver*, or even sentiment, in the healthy sense of the word, as in *Bonny at morn* or *Sair fyel d’himmy* (North Country songs, akin to Scottish), or, with the addition of a certain rhythmic piquancy, *Barbara Allen*; poetic feeling is not absent—witness *The Oak and the Ash*. In a number of the songs unearthed during recent years by the devoted labours of Mr. Cecil J. Sharp and others

various rhythmic irregularities, similar to those found in the wild songs of the Hebrides, not necessarily as written but as sung, have revealed themselves; for instance, five-four and seven-four measure, and five-bar phrases, and, in the rendering, a disregard of conscious time-keeping altogether. In the English folk-songs, too, as in the Celtic, there are many tunes cast in the old "modes"—keys which preceded our present system—the favourite being the strong, severe Dorian mode (D to D on the white keys of a piano), but songs can be found in all seven modes.

Nevertheless, taken as a whole, English folk-music is in marked contrast with Celtic: it is less pathetic, and more sturdy, rollicking, joyous, good-humoured, and in every line is redolent of out-of-door life; it is strong, but never becomes wild or rises to morbid or feverish passion; in place of mysticism it is straightforward and direct almost to triteness: there is little, if any, of the superfluous ornamentation which so often disfigures tunes; eccentric intervals are conspicuous by their absence, and original rhythms by their rarity; dance-tunes occur in great abundance, but "they rather imply an equal flow of contented and joyous spirits, than the vehement gestures, the stamping, and the concentration of muscular energy which are

represented by the dance tunes of many Southern races and of savages," says Sir Hubert Parry; there is much gaiety, humour, tenderness and playfulness; and, to quote Mr. Percy Scholes, "no composer of the past or present has made anything more lovely, within tiny limits, than the more perfect of the British folk-tunes. Within the brief length of a single line of melody (for the folk know nothing of harmony) nothing sweeter is to be imagined." And as for quantity, Mr. Cecil Forsyth tells us that five thousand folk-songs have already been collected in England alone—and being a Scotsman he is not likely to have meant Great Britain!

England's national dance is the Country Dance, a rustic dance dating from very early in our history: a manuscript copy of one in the Bodleian Library is attributed to 1300 A.D. and therefore is the oldest *copy* of a dance tune in existence, and probably the oldest dance! Other names for the same dance were *hey digyes* and *round*. In 1740 the dance was imported into Italy, where the people were "fond to a degree" of it; also into Paris, where "no kind of dance was received with so much favour as they." It came back from these countries under the names respectively of *Coranto* and *Contre-danse*, under which guise it was welcomed by many with all the fervour due to the

music of another country ! As a nation of sailors we may regard the hornpipe also as a national dance. I do not think the English can be said to have a national instrument, unless the high level of organ playing justifies their regarding the King of Instruments in that light.

## CHAPTER V

### THE MINSTRELS : MUSIC IN COURT, CASTLE AND COTTAGE.

PREVIOUS to the conversion of the nation as a whole to Christianity the bards and scalds, or glee-men as they came to be called, exercised all the functions of musicianship, vocal and instrumental, sacred and secular. But the new faith was brought by monks—men who, though often expert musicians, exercised their art only as the “Handmaid of Religion,” and who were not ready, as the bards had been, to place it at the service of any and every purpose. The bard was a poet-musician of whose themes religion was one : the monk was a missionary, one of whose means of propaganda was music. As a result the bard and the scald ceased to be a religious functionary and became a poet-musician pure and simple. For the first time in European history a sharp distinction arose between the sacred and secular musician. The latter remained the versifier, composer and singer, the entertainer, the accompanist of both song and dance, the inspirer to war-like deeds, the eulogist, the satirist, very often the news carrier : but the blue robe of priestly character fell from off his shoulders.

In Provence, when the eleventh century had run but little of its course—some say much earlier—there arose a body of royal and noble poet-musicians called Troubadours, whose theme was chiefly chivalry and love. They disdained, or were unable, to play their own accompaniments and hired professional musicians to do so. From the fact that these “jongleurs,” as they had at first been called, ministered musically to the Troubadours they became known as minstrels—such is the probable origin of the name. And though the position of the English scalds or gleemen was much more independent, both artistically and socially, than that of the jongleurs or minstrels had originally been, they yet took the name of minstrel after the Norman Conquest.

The materials are wanting which would enable us to say what the popular music brought into England by the Normans was like. But whatever its character, Mr. Chappell tells us that it made no impression upon the Anglo-Saxon inhabitants of this country. They continued to support their compatriot harpers with enthusiasm for a considerable period after the invasion. “Of this,” says Percy, “we have proof positive in the old metrical romance of Horn-Child, which, though from the mention of Saracens, etc., it must have been written at least after the first

crusade in 1096, yet, from its Anglo-Saxon language or idiom, can scarcely be dated later than within a century after the conquest . . . . the whole piece is exactly such a performance as one would expect from a Glee-man or Minstrel of the north of England, who had derived his art and his ideas from his Scaldic predecessors there." The French romance *Dan Horn* is a translation from the English. In the Prologue to another romance, *King Atla*, it is expressly stated that the stories of *Aelof* (*Allof*), *Tristan* and others had been translated into French from the English.

More than a century after the Conquest, namely in 1180, *Galid* or *Jeffrey*, a Harper, received an annuity from the Abbey of *Hide* near *Winchester*; and as harping was inseparable from singing, this reward was probably for songs sung to the monks, some of whom by no means confined their music to psalm chanting; and these songs, *Percy* says we may conclude, would be in the English language. Perhaps it should be added that the more rigid monks both here and abroad were greatly offended at the honours and rewards bestowed on minstrels; while others, as *Warton* shows, were generous in the good cheer and other recompense which they gave to those who entertained them. In this connection *Wood* tells an amusing tale of two itinerant priests who



in Henry III.'s day gained admittance to a grange belonging to the Benedictines of Abingdon by passing themselves off as minstrels. But the Prior discovered the ruse, and disappointed of an evening's amusement gave the clerics, not a square meal and money, but a good thrashing and prompt ejection ! As illustrative of the goodwill often subsisting between the cloistered musician and his brother in the outside world, mention must here be made of the remarkable secular canon "Sumer is icumen in," written and possibly composed by John Fornsete, chartulary of the Abbey of Reading in 1226. Of this, on its technical side, more will be said elsewhere.

Secular musicians were divided into three main classes : those in the service of the king or some great nobleman ; those in the town bands of watchmen, or "waits" ; and wandering minstrels. Perhaps the most famous of the former class in England were Rahere, Henry I.'s minstrel ; and Blondel and Gaucelm (or Anselm) Faidit, favourite minstrels of Richard I., who, however, were possibly not English, especially Blondel. The sums paid to minstrels were often lavish : but if Rahere received large sums he made good use of them, for he founded the hospital and Priory of S. Bartholomew's, Smithfield, in 1102, an early example of that generosity for which, whether

out of their poverty, as in the case of Mozart, or their comparative riches, as in the case of Handel, Verdi and Liszt, musicians have always been famous. But the sons of Jubal are equally famous, it is to be feared, for improvidence : and had all minstrels done as well with their wealth as Rahere did perhaps John of Salisbury would not have complained, half a century or so after the foundation of S. Bartholomew's, of the riches heaped upon amusement-makers of every kind. It is a complaint of which we frequently hear reverberations, and probably shall do as long as human nature remains what it is.

The Crusades gave a great impulse to minstrelsy, and furthered the cause of music in many ways : chiefly in the oriental instruments which the knightly adventurers brought back with them, and the melodic expansion which resulted from the acquaintance they made with Eastern scale-systems and music. Instruments played with a bow, with the exception of the crwyth and our brass instruments, mostly owe their introduction into the Western world to the religious wars inaugurated by Peter the Hermit with a very different purpose.

The most famous English Crusader was Richard I. who was also the most famous English Troubadour. One of his favourite minstrels, as every child

knows, was Blondel. Another was Gaucelm (or Anselm) Faidit. The latter was eminent for both his words and his melodies. Here is a song which he wrote on the death of Richard, as deciphered by Dr. Burney from a manuscript in the Vatican. It is one of the very few troubadour melodies which have come down to us. Gaucelm wrote both words and tune.

*Now fate has fill'd the*

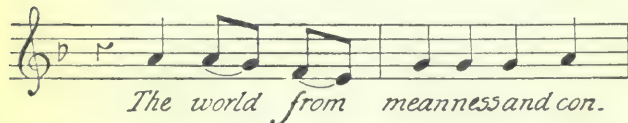
*mea...sure of my woes, And*

*rent my heart with grief un-felt be..fore; No*

*fu.ture blessings wounds like these can close, Or*

*mi...ti..gate the loss I <sup>tr</sup> now de.plore, The*

*va.liant Richard Eng..land's mighty king, The*



In the case of the Crusades, war favoured the minstrels : but it was often the case that minstrels inspired men in war. The best known individual instance is perhaps that of Taillefer, William the Conqueror's minstrel, who rode singing before the Norman army at the battle of Hastings, then rushed into the fray and fell fighting. And the most remarkable collective instance is that which occurred at the battle of Rhuydland, or Rothelan, and which reminds one very much of the camp-followers ruse at Bannockburn a century later. Ranulph, or Randal, Earl of Chester, being besieged in his castle, sent for help to De Lacy, Constable of Chester. The latter, gathering together the minstrels of all sorts then assembled at Chester fair, "by the allurements of their music" assembled such a vast number of people that the Welsh, towards whom the stage army had been marched out, supposing them to be a regular body of armed troops, instantly raised the siege and retired. So great was the service rendered that the minstrels within the jurisdiction of the Earls of Chester were granted special privileges, secured by charter. These privileges were conveyed and renewed by quaint ceremonies, descriptions of which are to be found in many books of antiquarian lore. When, in Elizabeth's reign, owing to abuses, restrictions were imposed

on minstrels, those of Chester enjoyed special exemption; indeed, their privileges lasted for six hundred years, for a renewal of the exemptive clauses is to be found in the last Act on the subject, passed in the reign of George III.!

*Piers Ploughman*, it may be recalled, describes his Friar as much better acquainted with the "*Rimes of Robinhode and of Randal, erle of Chester* than with his *Paternoster*."

China may perhaps claim to hold the record for first recognising the social status due to professors of the Divine Art. For some two thousand years before Christ the music-master to the Imperial household ranked next to the Emperor himself! But Europe comes much nearer this record than probably most people in the present day are aware of: indeed she may be said to exceed it in a titular sense. For not only was the very honourable title "master" applied to the King's Harper—for instance to one Richard, Harper to Henry III. in 1272—but he was sometimes termed King himself, both here and in France. In 1290 two daughters of Edward I. and Queen Eleanor were married: on the first occasion came, among others, King Grey of England, King Caupenny from Scotland, and Poveret, minstrel of the Marshal of Champagne; to the second wedding came as many as four hundred

and twenty-six minstrels, among whom £100, equal to £1,500 modern value, was distributed. In 1306 the *cour pleniére* held by King Edward was attended by no fewer than six Minstrel Kings, namely, Roy de Champagne (probably the Poveret from Champagne previously mentioned), Le Roy Capenny (probably "King Caupenny from Scotland"), Le Roy Boiesescue, Le Roy Marchis, Le Roy Robert, who is known from other sources to be the English King of the Minstrels, and is probably the "King Grey" of the former list; and Le Roy Druet. Of these, five received five marks each, equal to about fifty pounds of our money; and the last named, Druet, three marks. The surnames given mostly suggest an English origin; harpers were generally known only by their Christian names, but some by their office, thus "harper to the Bishop of Durham, the Abbot of Abyngdon, the Earle of Warrenne," and so forth; one is called "Reginald le Menteur," another "Makejoye," another "Perle in the eghe." Besides these were the nameless rank and file, described as *menestrous de la commune*. The total sum expended was about £200, which would be equal to some £3,000 in the present day. Henry V., who died in 1423, granted an annuity of a hundred shillings to each of his minstrels.

The position of the higher order of minstrels



was very much like that of the Heralds, who were also known by the title "Roy." The dress of the minstrels, too, would seem to have been as gorgeous as that of a herald, leastways that of the "minstrels of honour," as the highest order of musicians was called. They received costly habiliments as well as vast quantities of money from the nobles, a fact testified to by many authorities. In a poem on the times of Edward II. (1307-27) knights are urged to adhere to their proper dress lest they be mistaken for minstrels. In a manuscript of the thirteenth century in the arsenal at Paris is a little picture which bears so directly on this matter that I must refer to it, though it is not British. The minstrel Adenès li Rois is being received by Queen Mary of France, a prince and princess are also present, and the dress of the minstrel is exactly similar to that worn by the prince! The picture also shows the extreme intimacy of the minstrel with royalty, for Adenès leans, much at ease, against the Queen's couch with his left arm thrown across her knees!

In 1416 Henry V. ordered "rich gowns" for sixteen of his minstrels, but we are not told what they were like.

In S. Mary's Church, Beverley, Yorkshire, erected between 1422-60, is a pillar on which figures of five minstrels are carved, and which bears



the inscription "Thys pillor made the meyn-styrls." The minstrels are represented as wearing short coats reaching to the knee—one has an overcoat—and all have tolerably large purses, and chains round their necks. The instruments they hold are a pipe and tabor—instruments used chiefly for country dances and the morris dance: both were usually played by one performer, who held the pipe, a primitive instrument of the flute or oboe type, in his left hand while he beat the tabor, a tambourine but without the jingles, hung round his neck, with his right hand; a crwyth or treble viol, a bass flute, a treble flute, and a lute. These instruments, and especially the absence of a harp, suggest that the Beverley quintet were not minstrels of the highest class—all the more honour to them for being pillars of the church!

Perhaps the best description of a minstrel's dress is that given in a letter written from Kenilworth by a court official named Laneham, and though the date is 1575 the dress described is believed to be that which had been worn by minstrels of honour from the time of Edward IV. "The Squire minstrel of Middlesex [note the title, of which I do not recall any other instance] travelled the country this summer season unto worshipful men's houses," and he goes on to say

that he was a harper arrayed in a long gown of Kendal green, gathered at the neck with a narrow gorget, and fastened before with a white clasp ; his gown having long sleeves down to mid-leg, but slit from the shoulders to the hand and lined with white. His harp was "in good grace dependent before him," and his "wrest," or tuning-key, "tied to a green lace, and hanging by." He wore a red Cadiz girdle, and the corner of his handkerchief, edged with blue lace, hung from his bosom. Under the gorget of his gown hung a chain, "resplendent upon his breast of the ancient arms of Islington."

The livery of the London Waits at the time that Laneham wrote his letter, 1575, is described in Fairholt's *Lord Mayor's Pageant* as consisting of "Blue gowns, red sleeves and caps, every one having his silver collar about his neck."

The distinction between the different classes was very marked and is frequently alluded to by contemporary writers. For instance, in the old romance of *Lawnfel* we are told "They had minstrels of moche honours." "Minstrels of honour" rode on horseback and had servants to attend them—Edward IV. allowed his minstrels two servants each to carry their instruments. They could enter freely into the houses of the gentry, into castles and even into the king's palaces unasked.

A special dress for minstrels was a matter not only of ornament but utility : it was a passport to their many privileges, especially that of entry into castles and houses. Like all other privileges, those of the minstrels were usurped by unworthy and unauthorised persons, and in 1315 Edward II. enacted a special ordinance to check the abuse : “ Forasmuch as many idle persons under cover of Mynstrelsie, and going in messages, and other faigned business, have been and yet be receaved in other men’s houses to meate and drynke, and be not therewith contented yf they be not largely consydered with gyftes of the lordes of the houses . . . . We have ordeyned . . . . that to the houses of prelates, earles and barons, none resort to meate and drynke, unless he be a Mynstrel, and of these minstrels that there come none except it be three or four minstrels of honour at the most in one day, unless he be desired by the lorde of the house. And to the houses of meaner men that none come unless he be desired, and that such as shall come so, holde themselves contented with meate and drynke, and with such curtesie as the maister of the house wyl shewe unto them of his owne good wyll without their askyng of anything. And yf any one do against this Ordinance, at the first tyme he to lose his *Minstrelsie* and at the second

tyme to forswear his craft, and never to be receaved for a Minstrel in any house." There were almost as many social grades among the minstrels themselves as among those whom they entertained : and this edict is valuable as showing that the minstrels visited householders of all degrees. In the very next year Edward II. himself learnt how much could be done under cover of the dress of a minstrel. Stowe tells us that when celebrating the Feast of Pentecost, the king " set at table in the great hall of Westminster, attended by the peers of the realm, a certain woman, dressed in the habit of a Minstrel, riding on a great horse, trapped in the Minstrel fashion, entered the hall, and going round the several tables, acting the part of a minstrel, at length mounted the steps to the royal table, on which she deposited a letter. Having done this she turned her horse and, saluting all the company, she departed." The letter contained a remonstrance to the king on the favours heaped by him on his minions to the neglect of his faithful subjects. The door-keepers, on being threatened for admitting such a woman, readily replied, " that it never was the custom of the king's palace to deny admission to Minstrels, especially on such high solemnities and feast days." The incident, like a charter we are about to mention, is interesting as indicating

equality of privilege between men and women minstrels. The privileges of properly qualified musicians were safeguarded not only by primitive laws against those usurping the office, but by special charters granted to the minstrels themselves. It is impossible to say when the first of such charters were granted, but it was evidently at a very early period. It is known that in the thirteenth century there was a musical society in London called "Le Pui." And in a charter granted by Edward IV. in 1469 to his beloved minstrels reference is made to "the brothers and sisters of the Fraternity of Minstrels" having established and ordained similar guilds "in times past." Power is given to hold examinations, and to supervise, control and correct minstrels throughout the kingdom, the county of Chester excepted, for reasons already given. How long this Fraternity held effective sway is not quite clear, but in the next century a new guild was formed called a "Fellowship of Minstrels and Freemen of the City of London." In 1500 and 1501 the Musicians or Minstrels were the chief hirers of the Pewterers' Hall (these performers may have been either, or both, of the guilds referred to). This fact is extremely interesting as suggesting a much earlier date for the first concerts than that usually given; if, as seems not unlikely, the

minstrels recouped themselves by giving performances and making a charge for admission. The new Fellowship had many complaints to make of incompetent usurpers, similar to those which led to the charter of 1469. A century later it became necessary to form a new guild. This was done in 1604 by charter from James I. which created the Worshipful Company of Musicians, an active body which, if we regard it as the direct successor of the Fraternity formed in 1469, is the oldest musical society still existing. It is also the only City Company concerned with the exercise of a profession. It should not escape notice that in the admission of women to the highest degrees in music; in the holding of examinations as tests of professional efficiency; and in the legal registration of qualified teachers (compulsory in some Australian States: optional in Great Britain) we are but making a somewhat tardy return to the conditions of nearly—*probably* more than—five hundred years ago!

While some minstrels, including, as we have seen, those of the higher class, travelled all over the country, others belonged to the bands frequently maintained by kings, nobles and great towns, and were more or less stationary. Municipal musicians were generally known as “waits” and their instrument was very commonly a large

shrill kind of oboe used for signalling. Edward I. provided for the city gates of London to be shut every night by "the Servant dwelling there," and each servant to have a "Wayte at his own expense"—the watchman at Edward IV.'s palace was to sound his Wait every three hours. Henry VII.'s privy purse expenses from 1492 to 1504 include many payments to the "Waytes" of Dover, Canterbury, Dartford, Coventry and Northampton; also to the Minstrels of Sandwich; the shawms of Maidstone (players on a double-reed instrument which preceded the oboe); to bag-pipers; and to harpers, some of whom were Welsh. The watch of a city formed the municipal band and played at civic functions. They were in great request at banquets. England possesses one of the earliest and best illustrations of mediæval table music in a magnificent brass, ten feet long by five, erected to the memory of Robert Braunch and his two wives in the parish church of King's Lynn, in 1364—that, leastways, was the year of his death. At the foot of the brass is a representation of a banquet, believed to be a "peacock feast" given by Braunch, who was Mayor at the time, to Edward III. during a visit to the town. Twelve persons sit at one side of the table, and at each end are two musicians standing: their instruments being a fiddle, lute,



trumpet and schallmey (or small trumpet). The workmanship suggests a Flemish foundry, and a manuscript in the National Library at Paris contains a picture of the banquet part of the brass. Naumann, in his *History of Music* reproduces this picture, which he says is of the fifteenth century, and makes no mention of the English fourteenth century original : probably he did not know of it.

At the coronation of Henry V., which took place in Westminster Hall in 1413, we are told by Thomas de Elham that "the number of harpers was exceedingly great ; and the sweet strings of their harps soothed the souls of the guests by their soft melody," and the dulcet sounds of the united music of other instruments invited "the royal banqueters to the full enjoyment of the festival." Nor was such an accompaniment to a feast confined to royal palaces or baronial halls ; once a year the monks of Maxtoke Priory near Coventry were allowed a special refecton, and while it was in progress six minstrels from Lord Clinton's castle near by attended in the refectory, to sing, harp and play while the cowed brethren ate their repast ! In Queen Elizabeth's time, and probably very much earlier, the privileges of having music at meal-times was not confined to those of high estate but lay within the reach of anybody able to afford to dine at an



inn. For a writer named Gosson protests against the number of blind harpers and street and tavern musicians, exclaiming :—

“ Not a dish removed  
But to the music, nor a drop of wine  
Mixt with the water, without harmony.”

Like the professional examinations and so many other things, the bands which play while we satisfy the cravings of the inner man at great hotels and restaurants are but a revival and adaptation to modern conditions of the practice of our forefathers six centuries ago ! Another quaint instance may be mentioned : attracting people to mission services by secular music is not an idea of which modern evangelists can claim the invention. For S. Aldhelm, Abbot of Malmesbury, whom William of Malmesbury describes as the first Englishman to become famous as a musician, used to stand on the bridge at Malmesbury and sing “ like a minstrel ” till a crowd gathered, when he treated his congregation to words of more serious import !

In 1381 John of Gaunt erected at Tutbury in Staffordshire a *Court of Minstrels* similar to that annually held at Chester : it had legal jurisdiction over the professional musicians of five counties, with power to elect a King of the Minstrels. This was done with great ceremony, and the Court

existed during at least three hundred years, for Dr. Plot, in his History of Staffordshire, describes the holding of it in 1680. At this time—the fifteenth century—every great family had its establishment of musicians, and among them the harper held a high, apparently, indeed the highest, position. Some who were less wealthy retained a harper only: this was done by many bishops and abbots. Mr. Payne Collier, who edited Lord Howard's household book for the years 1481-85 for the Roxburghe Club, remarks on "the great varieties of entries in connection with music and musical performers" as forming "a prominent feature of the book." "Not only were the musicians attached to noblemen or to private individuals liberally rewarded, but also those who were attached to particular towns."

If in some ways we moderns have revived the practices of bygone days, in others we reverse them. A clergyman taking a service is paid double or four times what an organist is; in olden time the opposite was the case: a minstrel assisting at a function was paid twice as much as a cleric was, or more. In 1430 at the annual feast of the fraternity of Holy Crosse, at Abingdon, twelve priests each received fourpence for singing a dirge, while the same number of minstrels received two shillings and fourpence each, with

diet and horse meat. At Maxtoke, already referred to, two shillings were given to each priest and four to each minstrel, and the latter were entertained to supper by the Sub-prior in the painted chamber of the monastery. The Prior of the same convent once gave a preaching friar only sixpence ! As late as 1560 we find the same relative rewards maintained. Thus in the books of the Stationers' Company : "*Item*, payed to the preachers 6s. 2d. *Item*, payed to the minstrels 12s."

Edward IV.'s book of household expenses includes provision for thirteen minstrels, as well as twenty-four chaplains and clerks and eight choir-boys. These different bodies of musicians were intimately connected. For the "Master of the Children," or organist and almoner—posts often united—was expected to provide entertainments of all kinds. In their earliest form these germs of the drama, for such they were, went by the name of "Interludes." This is the title given to an entertainment compiled by Gilbert Banistir in 1482. William Cornyshe, composer to the Chapel Royal in the days of Henry VII. and VIII., is recorded as writing dramas ; John Redford, organist of S. Paul's Cathedral, 1530-40 ; one Heywood ; and Richard Jeffries, a poet and composer of madrigals who died in 1566, may be

mentioned as other instances. The earliest known piece of music printed in England is a song in an "Interlude" by Rastell—a musician of whom I can find no details. Indeed, the association between music and the stage was so close that Shakespeare was in all probability a member of the Musicians' Company himself.

The world's greatest poet lived in a house hired from "Henry Walker, citizen and minstrel of London." As Walker is elsewhere described as "Musician, of London," he may well be taken as representing the transition from the "minstrel" of former days, generally a retainer in some great household, or a traveller from castle to castle, to the "musician" of our own, working on his own account and living not in a palace or castle but a town.

There were many causes for this change. One was that several of the functions of the minstrels had developed into separate professions. The religious function of bard and scald had become vested in the cloistered musician, as had his original *role* of literary man, polisher of language, chronicler and general civilizer. In the process of evolution, with its inevitable specialisation, the joint office of poet-musician had become divided. Poem and song had for centuries meant the same thing. Chaucer's *Troilus and Cressida*,

though almost as long as the *Æncid*, was to be "redde or songe." Gradually poetry came to be written by men who were not musicians, and which was not intended to be sung, but "redde" only. Mr. Henry Davey declares that "poet and musician were not only closely connected but were even identical in most cases" till the seventeenth century.

No doubt the invention of printing had much to do with this change: it placed poetry within reach of those who could neither recite nor sing. But in the long run it did more: it took from the minstrel not merely the function of making verses but that of disseminating them. For centuries the recited or sung ballad had been a powerful weapon for good or evil: and this power the printing press intensified to an almost fabulous extent. Fletcher of Saltoun may have been the first to make an epigram on the relative influence of the ballads of a nation and its laws, but he was far from the first to have the immense power of the former brought home to him practically. So easily attainable and immense a power was not likely long to escape the notice of reformers, political and religious, and in 1533 an Act was passed to suppress "fond [i.e. foolish] books, ballads, rhimes and other lewd treatises in the English tongue" intended "to subvert the true

exposition of Scripture" and to "instruct the youth of this realm untruly." Then, as now, new political ballads were written to well-known old tunes, and in 1537 John Hogon was arrested for singing a political ballad to the tune of "The Hunt is up." Ballads flourished in Edward VI.'s reign: they were sternly suppressed within a month of Mary coming to the throne, and flourished again in Elizabeth's reign. During the mid-sixteenth century far more ballads were printed than books. At the end of the year 1560, of ballads left for entry at Stationers Hall, 796 remained for transfer to the new Wardens, and only 44 books! But a change was fast taking place: the ballad, from having been used by all classes, was becoming the exclusive property of the lower orders. Henry Chettle, in 1592, complained bitterly of "idle youths singing and selling ballads in every corner of cities and market towns," and mentions two vendors in particular who bragged that they had made "twenty shillings a day," mostly at no larger a town than Bishop's Stortford, "whilst others, horse and man . . . have together hardly taken ten shillings a week."

In place of the priestly Bard, the courtly Troubadour and the King of the Minstrels, the words of ballads had come to be written by such men as Elderton, "with his ale-crammed nose."

and Thomas Deloney, "the balleting silk-weaver of Norwich," whose chief offence in the eyes of a writer named Nashe appears to have been that he did not drink beer enough and consequently was not merry, but wrote such ballads as *The Thunderbolt against Swearers* and *The Strange Judgments of God*. The ballads were printed across one side only of very coarse brown paper, hence the common designation "broadside"; and were sold all over the country at three for a halfpenny by chapmen, that is, to give the Saxon derivation, "cheapeners." The work of the itinerant reciter and singer of narrative verse was gone. Of this change the position of the harp was typical: from being the solace of kings and nobles, and forbidden to the lowest class, it had become almost the monopoly of the latter—the livelihood of mendicant musicians and tavern minstrels.

The decline of the feudal system, which became practically obsolete with the passing of the Military Tenures Act in Charles II.'s reign, also tended to the subversion of one of the old types of minstrel—the personal retainer.

Another great factor in the metamorphosis of the minstrel into the general musical practitioner, vocal or instrumental specialist or composer of to-day, was the appointment of laymen as



organists. In pre-Reformation days the organ was always played by a priest or monk, as it is in Spain at the present day. But with the dawning of the great religious upheaval of the sixteenth century laymen were allowed to take this part of divine service. The first English lay organist was long believed to be Dr. Tye, who was appointed organist of Ely Cathedral at a salary of £10 in 1541, and in 1560 took Holy Orders; but, in 1876, Dr. Cummings discovered that Thomas Tallis, whose name is best known in connection with his harmonization of the Anglican Responses and the hymn-tune "Tallis' Canon," was earlier, for he was appointed to Waltham Abbey previous to the dissolution of the monasteries in 1540. With an important, permanent and salaried position in a cathedral or parish church open to him, and similar positions in princely households becoming fewer and fewer, the man of musical gifts was not likely to choose the *role* of wandering or unattached minstrel. And hence it came about that after being prominent figures on the world's stage since the curtain rose on that prelude to history which we call legend, the picturesque forms of the bard and minstrel disappeared. They did not, of course, all leave the stage at once, or suddenly. And yet it is possible to name a year in which it may be said that the



word "exit" was writ against their name in the play-book of life. For like so many other human institutions—nor need we necessarily exclude those of divine origin—they grew out of a necessity, for centuries brilliantly served a great purpose, and then, their work done, withered away. In 1597 an Act was passed whereby those who had at one time been welcome guests in kings' palaces and could open any man's door unasked, if found "wandering abroad" were to be arrested as "rogues, vagabonds and sturdy beggars."

But we may resume our simile: for like the actor the minstrel left the stage only to return in another garb. The blue-robed Druid has reappeared amongst us as the white-robed choirman, organist and composer; the minstrel who inspired armies may be recognised in the composer of patriotic songs and in the members of military bands; the satire on the follies of the age which was a common feature of mediæval ballads, still takes musical form in comic opera and humorous songs; the musical Guilds of the fifteenth and previous and later centuries, whose chief function was the examining and attesting of aspirants to professional status, have been revived in the form of our Royal and other Colleges and Academies of Music; the thirteen minstrels who formed Edward IV.'s Court Band have had

direct descendants in every reign, and in the present day their representatives play under the baton of Sir Walter Parratt, "Master of the Musick"; those who were the retainers of great lords, spiritual and temporal, since the decay of feudalism, have been far less in evidence in Great Britain than abroad. But some time previously to 1718 the Duke of Chandos established a private chapel at Canons, Edgware, on a scale of magnificence almost equal to the Chapel Royal, and as his chief musician appointed first Dr. Pepusch and secondly, in 1718, George Frederick Handel, who had been in England, with a short intermission, eight years. It was while at Canons that Handel composed the *Chandos Anthems*, a *Te Deum*, his first English oratorio *Esther* and the serenata *Acis and Galatea*. No other British nobleman had such a "chapel" at the time, or has had since, and the Duke's reproduction here of a type of establishment characteristic of Germany and Austria met with considerable ridicule. Nevertheless, Dr. Pepusch and Handel, both of them, it may be remembered, born in Germany, may be regarded as eighteenth century reproductions of the old retainer-minstrels of feudal days. In the present day the private organist whom a few noblemen appoint to their chapels is the only official at all analagous. In

our many municipal bands the old Waites may find themselves not without a modern representative, and the travelling minstrel is still with us in as great force as ever: those of the lower orders, the *menestrous de la commune*, are little changed: they still trudge on foot from town to town with a penny whistle or other easily portable instrument, and give "a fit of mirth for a groat"; and the "minstrels of honour," with horses and servants to carry their baggage, are reincarnate in the great artistes who travel over the same ground as King Caupenny, between London and Edinburgh, in magnificent saloon carriages; or overseas, as Roy Poveret did, but much farther than he—round the world in fact, in a veritable floating palace.

Man, like the birds, is a musical animal: music is an essential of his nature, and the forms in which it appears and reappears from age to age differ only in detail.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE PEOPLE AS MUSICIANS.

IN all probability music was never confined to those who made a livelihood of it, either in Britain or elsewhere, for we hear of amateur musicians as early as professional. In King Gabbet, who according to Wace's metrical chronicle sat on the throne of Britain about 1149 B.C., we have not only a royal musician a hundred years before the Jews could boast of King David, "the sweet Psalmist of Israel," but one said to have been the greatest musician of his day. He also was the first of a remarkable number of kings and queens of our country who were expert players, singers and composers. We know from many sources that the mass of the British people have always been musical. Pythias, a Greek navigator and Marseilles merchant and contemporary of Aristotle (384-322 B.C.), visited Britain and was the first to throw light on the musical tendencies of the natives, who, he says, always carried a horn about with them. Probably it is merely on account of their exalted social position that the first three amateur musicians whose names we know are all royalties : they are

King Gabbet, just mentioned ; Princess Helena, daughter of King Coel (who was possibly the original of "Old King Cole" of the nursery rhyme) and mother of the Emperor Constantine, who is said to have been skilful in music and who was born 250 A.D. ; and Alfred the Great, whose proficiency with the harp is as well known to school children as his shortcomings in cake-baking. It is in his reign that secular music begins to stand out, apart from the bards, as an item of polite education. The harp was the national instrument, indeed one may say the world-instrument, at the time, and ability to play on it was one of the things necessary to a gentleman or free-man. No one else—no slave—was allowed to possess one ; and a harp could not be seized for debt, for if a free-man lost his harp he lost his rank. It was due to no morbid over-sensitiveness that Caedmon left the room when, the harp being passed round at banquets, he found himself unable to play upon it. At whatever period we look into our national history we find this universal practice of music. We have space to turn the page and make note of its testimony only here and there.

Speaking of London and writing in 1174, Fitz-Stephen (Stephanides), the friend and biographer of Thomas Becket, said "In summer

evenings the young people danced till dark, to the sound of the harp (or cittern), and some of the maidens acted as musicians." Also that on festival days the boys of the London schools attached to the three principal churches "contended with each other in verse" and wound up their contests "by recitations of epigrams, ballads and rhymes in which the foibles and frailties of their fellows were sarcastically exposed, without naming the individuals." At this "the audience, who were prepared to enter into the jest, shook the assembly with peals of laughter."<sup>1</sup>

In the middle ages the country simply reverberated with song. If evidence were wanting of this, it would be found in the fact that our poets, from Adam Davy, who flourished about 1312, onwards simply teem with references to it. We may learn as much from Chaucer of the music of his day, and of the estimation in which the art was then held in England, as if a treatise had been written on the subject. For there is hardly a character whom he does not represent as a musician of some sort. Thus in the *Canterbury Tales*, describing the Squire, he says :

"Syngyne he was, or flowtynge [fluting] al the day ;

•        •        •        •        •        •        •

He cowde songes wel make and endite."

<sup>1</sup> *Descrip. Lond.* edited by T. Pogue.

From very early days—how early it is not easy to say—up to the middle of the eighteenth century, the quiet sweet voice of the flute was to be heard in many European countries, and not least in our own. There were many kinds of flute, among them one called the Pilgrim's Staff from its great length. It may be doubted, says one “devoted to the sweetest of pipes,” Mr. J. Finn, “whether any musical instrument ever enjoyed a longer or wider popularity than did the famous flute called the Recorder.” And the flute which Chaucer describes the squire as playing was probably of this kind.

Of the mendicant friar :—

“Wel couth he syngre and playe on a rote [hurdy-gurdy]

• • • • •

And in his harpyngre, when that he had sunge  
His eyghen twynkeled in his hed aright.”

Of the miller :—

“A bagpipe cowde he blowe and sown [sound].”

The poor scholar, Nicholas ; the parish clerk ; and the apprentice in the Cook's Tale are represented as playing, respectively, the “gay sawtrye” (psaltry, a dulcimer)<sup>1</sup>, the rubible or “rebec” (a small fiddle with two or three strings), and the giterne (a kind of guitar).

<sup>1</sup> Owing to the unfortunate translation of the Hebrew word “nebel” as “psaltry” or “psalm” in the Bible, many theologians have been led to think that the psaltry was a harp, and many musicians that the nebel was a dulcimer.

It will be seen that there was as much music in the cottage as in the court and castle. Men and women alike sang at their work, while carmen and plough-boys were especially given to whistling. The Carman's Whistle was one of the best known of songs. Singing to the spinning-wheel, and while milking, was particularly characteristic. Bishop Hall referred to this in the lines :—

“ Sung to the wheel, and sung unto the pail,  
He sends forth thraves of ballads to the sale.”

It was the same in Scotland. Not only the bards, but the heroes themselves, their wives and young women, are represented in most ancient Gaelic poetry as playing on the harp.

“ And the shell went round, the bards sung, and the soft hand of virgins trembled on the string of the harp ” (Dr. Smith's translation of the poem of *Tiomna Ghuil*). And if children did not play on the instrument they at any rate tried to : in the poem of *Trathal* two children take the harp from their mother but cannot find the sound they want :

“ Why does it not answer us ?  
Shew us the string where dwells the song.”  
She bids them search for it till she returns—  
Their little fingers wander among the wires.

Here we may well introduce a tune written nearly a century before Chaucer was born (1340),



and probably popular for many generations earlier still and for many generations after his death. Especially as, to the best of the writer's knowledge, it is the oldest dance-tune extant. It was written on the back of a MS. collection of statutes of Edward I., now in the Bodleian Library, Oxford. The notation is of exactly the same character as that of *Sumer is icumen in*. The extract here given, for the tune is too long for complete quotation, is about a quarter of the whole, and is taken from J. Stafford Smith's version, he having been the first to decipher the manuscript.

ENGLISH COUNTRY DANCE : *cir.* 1260 : THE OLDEST  
DANCE TUNE KNOWN.





But immense strides in the art of deciphering old musical manuscripts have been made since Stafford Smith's day—he flourished at the conjunction of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. And it is only right to say that, taking advantage of more recent research, Mr. Wooldrige demurs to the above generally accepted version of the tune: and in the posthumous edition of Mr. Chappell's *Old English Popular*

Music, which he has edited, he gives the following as the correct interpretation of the rhythm :



But the study of folk-music soon familiarises one with the fact that tunes often undergo considerable change in passing from mouth to mouth or fiddle to fiddle. I can find no such abundance of syncopation in any other English dance as is

practically constant throughout the hundred and sixty-six bars of Mr. Wooldridge's version. And I strongly suspect that though this may have been the original rhythm, constant and rapid repetition would in time wear down its corners, its syncopation, till it came to be played much as Stafford Smith assumed it to be. 'The same melody will not infrequently lend itself to two different species of time, as the student of hymn-tunes knows full well.

It is significant that if we turn the page of our history two hundred and fifty years later than Chaucer we shall find exactly the same thing—the great poet of the age, and in this case of all ages, brimming over with references to music both vocal and instrumental. So much so that if Shakespeare did not write a treatise on music, music has written more than one treatise on him—that is to say, musicians have written books on the innumerable and profoundly interesting references to their art to be found, in not one only, but practically all his works.<sup>1</sup>

During the reign of Elizabeth the study of music was universal. Chappell says, "It was the predominant art, and no subject during this period, perhaps not even excepting religion, so

<sup>1</sup> See e.g. "Shakespeare, his Music and Song," by A. H. Moncur-Sime, in this Series.

much occupied men's minds." To the upper classes it was an essential part of education. Morley tells an amusing story which reminds one extremely of Caedmon's self-reproach at having neglected the harp. A young man went out to dinner, and was asked by his hostess to read off a part in a madrigal at sight: on his proving unable to do it the company exclaimed "Where were you brought up?" But such accomplishments were by no means confined to the higher social grades. The City of London advertised the musical abilities of boys educated in Bridewell and Christ's Hospital as a mode of recommending them as apprentices and servants. A century later, it may be recalled, Pepys the diarist confesses that he chose his servants according to their ability to take part in household music. Delonez, writing in 1598, tells how a man who tried to pass himself off for a shoemaker was detected through his being able "neither to sing, sound the trumpet, play upon the flute, nor reckon up his tools in rhyme." The bulk of the population not only sang constantly, but sang in parts. Of this Chaucer's description of the song of the Pardoner and Summoner or Apparitor is good evidence:—

"Ful lowde he sang, 'come hider, love, to me,'  
This Sompnour bar[bare] to him a stif burdoun  
Was never trompe of half so gret a sown."

The Sompnour supported the Pardoner by adding a deep burden or bass—probably a drone-bass or single sustained note. Tinkers, tailors, blacksmiths, servants, clowns, and others are mentioned time and again as taking part in vocal harmony. In the old Moralities or sacred plays introducing allegorical impersonations of virtues and vices, part-music was sung instead of ballads : this was generally done in Canon, that is, several voices sang the same tune but each began at a given length of time after the preceding voice. This is what is meant when, as frequently happens, one of the *dramatis personæ* tells the others to sing *after* him. The same thing is found in all the writers of the period. Peele, 1584, Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, and others might all be quoted as referring to the singing of Catches and Rounds (which are forms of the Canon) by apothecaries, friars, maids, artificers, smiths, colliers, clothworkers, weavers, watchmen, and indeed all kinds of people. One of the most frequently named catches was, “Three blue beans in a blue bladder, rattle, bladder, rattle”; another was “Whoop, Barnaby.”

Instrumental music was just as common as vocal : almost everybody seems to have

played on some instrument or other.<sup>1</sup> Among the most popular of instruments in the middle ages was the bagpipe. It was familiar to the Anglo-Saxons. A ninth century manuscript by the Abbot of S. Blaise on sacred music contains an illustration of it, as does the Minstrels' Gallery in Exeter Cathedral, erected in the fourteenth century; and on a crozier presented to William of Wykeham in 1403 there is the figure of an angel playing it! It therefore was quite probably used in monasteries and religious houses. "Pipes" are expressly mentioned by Abbot Ailred of Rivaux Abbey, writing about 1150, as among the instruments used (to his evident regret) in church, along with cymbals, organs and cornets. And these may have been bagpipes. Bagpipes were common in England centuries earlier, and for much longer, than in Scotland. Edward III. employed pipers and made payments to them sufficient to allow of their visiting foreign minstrel schools, and subsequent monarchs did much the same. But the instrument was not confined to professional players. We have already quoted Chaucer as putting it into the hands of a miller. Shakespeare often alludes to it, as do other English

<sup>1</sup>In a Latin poem written in 1393 Richard of Maidstone mentions sixteen instruments: shepherd's pipe; small dulcimer; flute; kettle-drum; monochord; organ; dulcimer; cymbal; lyre; zambuca (bag pipe?); lute; "situla"; straight trumpet; viol; crooked horn; harp.

poets, but, strange to say, Scotland's national poet, Burns, only mentions it once. It came into general favour in Scotland at the close of the sixteenth century. In England it began to decline about the same time. Nevertheless it was regarded with evident favour as late as 1561, for Vernon, in his *Hunting of Purgatory to Death* of that date, says: "I knewe a priest whiche, when any of his parishioners should be maryed, would take his backe-pype, and go fetche theym to the church, playnge sweetely afore them, and then would he laye his instrument handsomely upon the aultare tyll he had maryed them and sayd masse. Which thyng being done, he would gentillye bringe them home agayne with backe-pype. Was not this priest a true ministrell, thynke ye? For he dyd not counterfayt the ministrell, but was one in dede."

Dekker, in the *Gull's Horn-book*, tells us that the usual routine of a young gentlewoman's education was "to read and write, to play upon the virginals, lute and cittern and to read prick-song [*i.e.* music written or pricked down] at sight." As we learn from Ben Jonson, among others, it was usual to have a base-viol, or viol da gamba, hung up in drawing-rooms for visitors to play on. Though chiefly played by men it was occasionally played by women, too, at least in James I.'s time.



The viol family was the immediate predecessor of the violin family, from which it differed chiefly in having six or more strings, and in the back always, and the belly often, being flat. The frequently used term "chest of viols" meant a set of six instruments of various sizes. Viols and the lute formed the stringed orchestra during the middle ages. The latter, the lute, was for a long time the most popular instrument in Europe. In shape it was like a pear cut lengthwise in half, and it had five or six pairs of strings. Keeping the instrument in tune was difficult and expensive, and lute strings were a favourite form of present to a lady.

Rivalling the lute in importance was the virginal or viginals. It was a stringed instrument played by means of a keyboard, like the modern pianoforte. In form it was like a box without any legs or supports, and was usually placed upon a table or stand. Though the gentler sex enjoyed no monopoly of it, the instrument was especially favoured by maidens; hence, according to one conjecture, its name. Another suggestion is that this was due to the association of the instrument with the song *Angelus ad Virginem*, to which Chaucer and other old writers so often refer. The earliest mention of the virginal in writing is in a rhymed proverb, which was inscribed on a wall

of the Manor House of Leckington, Yorkshire, and is said to be as old as the time of Henry VII., 1485—1509. Thus this allusion is older than the earliest known mention abroad, that made by Viridung in 1511. The word in question occurs in the first line of the verse which runs as follows :

“A slac stryng in a Virgynall soundithe not aright.”

Henry VIII. was a good player on the instrument and had a virginal player attached to his Court. Edward VI. had three. Mary, Elizabeth and James I. retained the same number. The three queens of the period, those just mentioned and Mary Queen of Scots, were all accomplished players, especially Mary Tudor, who also played on the regals and lute. The former instrument was a kind of very small portable organ: the name remained in use for organs till as late as 1767. The virginal increased in popularity till the Great Fire of London, when Pepys, under September 2, 1666, describing the flight of the citizens, says, “I observed that hardly one lighter or boat in three that had the goods of a house in, but there was a pair of virginals in it.” The name lasted till Queen Anne’s day, when we find it superseded by the word “spinet,” an instrument practically the same, and the predecessor of the harpsichord, which was the immediate

precursor, though not the generic ancestor, of the pianoforte. The history of the latter instrument has been a veritable romance. Owing to its great compass, its capacity for harmonic as well as melodic effects, its expressiveness, the ease with which music for voices and all other instruments can be adapted to it, its incomparable character as an instrument for accompanying solos of any and every kind, it has achieved a position enjoyed by no other instrument. And it did this earlier in our own country than in any other. But there is a grave debit side to the account, and this also is more marked in our own country than in any other. For the advent of the piano has ousted more other instruments than the invention of any other means of producing musical sounds. Its coming has strangled the practice of household concerted music, vocal and instrumental, superseding the singing of madrigals and performances by that family orchestra the "chest of viols" which were a marked feature of our domestic life in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Reference has already been made to the fact that though music in Great Britain has always been on a democratic basis, the social factor has at times made itself strongly felt—as when slaves were not allowed to play the harp. An incident in the early days of pianoforte making shows that

the art was not free from the influence of society conventions in much more recent times. When the harpsichord was being superseded by the pianoforte in the late eighteenth century, Jacob Kirkman made a number of instruments of the new kind. They did not sell as rapidly as he had wished owing to ladies of fashion devoting themselves to the guitar. To appeal to the vast musical superiority of the pianoforte, or forte-piano, as it was often called, would be, he knew, in vain. But he was an astute man and knew something which would not. Obtaining a number of guitars he distributed them in such numbers among the maid-servants of the great families in London that their mistresses could not in very shame continue to play so cheap, easy and vulgar an instrument and betook themselves to the piano. Thereby Kirkman laid the foundations of a prosperous and lucrative business.

To return to the days when not one but many kinds of instrument were to be found in both castle and cottage: what was the music which was played on the bagpipes, harp, gittern, cittern, flutes of all kinds, chests of viols, and virginals? To describe it in detail would take volumes, but one generalisation can be given and with this we must be content. For centuries there was no such thing as instrumental music wholly in-

dependent of song and dance, with the exception of that extremely ancient Welsh harp music of which an example has already been given, and which is of the nature of an exercise rather than of music properly so-called. All instrumental music was an arrangement for strings, pipe or keyboard, of some song, or an elaboration of some dance-tune. In this latter category were included "Divisions," which were simply what we should now call "Variations." The great classic writers of the Elizabethan and subsequent period, Byrd, Bull, Munday, Morley, Giles Farnaby, and Orlando Gibbons, composed mainly on this plan. The first deviation from it was very appropriately named a "Fancy" or "Fantasy," meaning that the composer had followed his fancy in both composing his own theme and in the treatment of it. Examples of this type of piece are to be found in the composers just named. Later on a number of dances were strung together and called a *suite of pieces*, which form was the immediate precursor of the sonata and symphony, the latter being simply a sonata for orchestra.

The chief occasions for music were banquets, both great and small. There was the minstrels' gallery in the great halls, and for centuries it was the custom after the meal at a social gathering to pass round the harp or viol, which everyone was

expected to play on, or to sing rounds, catches and madrigals. Annual occasions for much music were the fairs and May-day celebrations. The right to hold the former was a very valuable privilege generally safeguarded by royal charter. The first such charter of which I can find any trace was that granted to Winchester by William the Conqueror. Most of the greater towns had their fairs, and almost every village its "feast." And music was so conspicuous a feature of the latter as to pass into a proverb: "Thou need no more send for a fidler to a feast than a beggar to a fair." In some cases a fair, leastways that of Wolverhampton, had its own local tune. At the town named there was on the eve of the fair "a procession of men in antique armour, preceded by musicians playing the fair-tune." I cannot recall this being mentioned in any previous work on music. The quotation is from Shaw's History of Staffordshire. The celebration of May-day is believed to date from pagan times. It was taken part in by everybody from kings and queens downwards. Owing to being held on one and the same day, there could not be the same gathering of musicians from distant parts as at a fair. But this only testifies to the widespread character of musicianship, for every village or hamlet had its player on the

bagpipe or fiddle, and sometimes drum or trumpet, to enliven its May-day festival.

At the other end of the social scale was the masque. Royalty sometimes attended May-day festivals, but it took an actual part in masques, as, of course, kings and queens had done in the state pageants in which masques are said to have had their origin. These masques, or out-of-door plays with music interspersed, were in their turn the precursors of the opera, which thus had an origin in England quite different from what it had abroad, where it was the outcome of an endeavour in Italy about 1599 to revive the Greek drama with chorus. Up to the time of Henry VIII. these pageants were out-door processions and spectacular shows conducted mainly by hired performers. But early in that king's reign a marked change took place. In 1512 the king with eleven others took part in a masked ball with pageantry at Richmond. From this beginning, in which the novelty was not in the masking but in the high rank of the performers, sprang the masques of Thomas Campion, Ben Jonson, James Shirley and others. The aristocratic character of the masques may be gathered from the most frequent place of their performance—the Palace at Whitehall. One of these entertainments given in 1632-3 cost no less a sum than twenty-one



thousand pounds, of which over one thousand was given to the musicians. In the next year another was given the text of which, paradoxically enough, was by the most eminent of Puritan poets, Milton, his *Comus* being performed at Ludlow Castle, Shropshire. The music was by the famous composer, Henry Lawes. Probably the last masque written was Arne's "Alfred," produced in 1740, and in which "Rule, Britannia" first occurs. There could be no better close to this chapter, and to our consideration of secular music as a social factor in Great Britain, than this reference to the origin of what has been declared to be the finest patriotic song ever composed.



## CHAPTER VII

### CHURCH MUSIC: FROM THE INTRODUCTION OF CHRISTIANITY TO PURITAN TIMES.

WHAT the music was which the blue-robed bards performed when exercising their office in connection with sacrificial or other worship we do not know. All we can say is that music was regarded as an integral act of worship: to lack a funeral song was esteemed the greatest misfortune, since the belief prevailed that without it the spirits of the dead would enjoy neither rest nor happiness in the world to come. But there is hardly ground for even a reliable guess as to its nature.

Nor do we know what music was used by the first Christian Church in these islands. Tertullian tells us that Christianity had been introduced as early as 203 A.D., and the attendance of three British bishops at the Council of Arles in 314 has often been commented on. Both dates are earlier than that of the foundation of the first known Christian school of church music. For this was that founded in Rome by Pope Sylvester in 330 A.D. Nor does this help us much in regard to music subsequent to it. For we know nothing

of the music taught in the school save that the music of the Jews having been antiphonal, that of the early Christians would probably be so too ; and this is borne out by Pliny the Younger, who, writing in the second century, says that this was the method adopted by the Christians in his day.

The first Christian Church in Britain was prior also to S. Ambrose, bishop of Milan 374—97, the first great apostle of Christian church music. He adopted the eight Greek scales,<sup>1</sup> out of which to frame his chants, and also the Greek system of singing each syllable to only a single note. Three hundred years later his method was brought into England, but seems to have gained no foothold.

It has been suggested that the first British Christians probably adopted the tunes used in heathen worship, and that among our carols, which in their original form and for centuries afterwards were sung-dances and often secular, “are remnants of ancient sacrificial chants and melodies.” The use of such music is not nearly so unlikely as those unacquainted with musical history might naturally suppose it to be. Jealousy of “the devil having all the best tunes” is almost as old as vocal worship itself. The words translated “the hind of the morning” in the heading of Psalm xxii, Revised

<sup>1</sup> Not four only, as stated by all but the most recent investigators.

Version, are "probably the words of some well-known song of the day,"<sup>1</sup> which may have been secular, and they are believed to indicate that the psalm was to be sung to the same tune. The same remark applies to the words "The silent dove of them that are afar off."<sup>2</sup> S. Columba was trained by an Irish bard named Gemmains, and doubtless from him learnt that art of singing which so won the hearts and ears of the Irish people. Time and again the Christian church has turned secular music to sacred purposes and made it her own.\* Mr. F. J. Crowest is of opinion that a species of monotonic chant with inflections was in use in Gaul before the time of Ambrose at Milan, and that the three bishops who attended the Council at Arles in 314 probably brought it back with them. Two French bishops, Germanus of Auxerre and Lupus of Troyes, were made respectively bishop and co-adjutor bishop of Sodor and Man, early in the fifth century, the former dying 448 A.D. And they, too, probably brought the Gallican church chant with them.

If so, this Gallican chant would probably displace any heathen temple tunes which were in use, and be added to any church songs which

<sup>1</sup> "A Handbook to the Psalms," Rev. E. M. Holmes, LL.B., p. xxiv.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. lvi, R.V.

\* See, e.g. Chronological Table under 1070 and 1360.

those who first planted Christianity in Britain had brought with them, or any local British use which the native church had evolved for itself.

It has a direct bearing on this question that up till late in the seventh century the British church had its own local usage as regards the shape of a monk's tonsure—deemed as a point of importance in those days!—and the date at which Easter was to be kept. S. Austin, or Augustine, first Archbishop of Canterbury, was sent here with forty monks, to convert the Anglo-Saxons and establish the authority of the Roman See, by the S. Gregory who is the reputed author of the "Gregorian" chants. But he did not get on well with the British bishops whom he met in conference in 603 A.D. This makes it the more probable that the British church had an independent musical "use" of its own.

But British independence in regard to Easter and the tonsure was abandoned after much contention at the Council held at Whitby in 664 A.D. And within four years of the adoption of Roman ritual, Roman, or at least Milanese, ritual-music or "plain-song" was adopted too. For in 668 Theodore of Tarsus and Adrian of Naples came to England and taught the Ambrosian system of plainsong. In this chant, already referred to, the melody is very short, varying from five to

seven notes (a modern Anglican chant has ten) ; and as the syllabic Greek method was followed, the style was declamatory in character. It does not seem to have spread in Great Britain, for we hear no more of it. Ten years later Benedict Biscop sent to Rome for singers for York Minster, and they brought Gregory's system. A distinguishing feature of this was the singing of a syllable to two or more notes. This gave the music a sphere and character of its own, and on this account Gregory has been called the founder of modern music. To the present writer, however, it is impossible to believe that music was thousands of years old before *anyone* thought of singing one syllable to a plurality of notes ! The credit due to Gregory—great enough—is more probably that of adapting to church music some contemporary system other than that of the Greek dramatic chorus. In 680 A.D., two years after the Roman singers had arrived at York, Pope Agatho sent no less a person than the Precentor of S. Peter's at Rome, a man named John, on a similar mission. He established a number of music schools in Northumbria, and the Gregorian system became universal. The custom of sending to Rome for singers lasted well over a century, perhaps much longer, for " Paul the Deacon " arrived here to teach singing in 800 A.D.

It was also customary to send English priests to Rome for instruction in church music : and it was in all probability to avoid the necessity for this that a school for the training of ecclesiastics in liturgical music was established at Canterbury, about the period of which we are speaking, though the exact date is uncertain.

Eusebius, born about 264 A.D., speaking of the consecration of new churches, says " there was a place appointed for those who sang psalms, youths and virgins, old men and young " ; and one of the few things known about the Therapeutists, a sect of Christian ascetics prior to 300 A.D., is that they " selected from the rest two choirs, one of men and one of women, who sang alternately." But, this apart, the earliest Christian choirs of which we have any record were male choirs. The earliest trebles we hear of were boys. S. Odo of Clugny (died 942 A.D.) and the even more famous musician Guido of Arezzo, born about 995 A.D., both mention their choir-boys. These sang in octaves with the men. Choirs in Britain do not appear to have included women before the Commonwealth. The high position occupied by our Chapels Royal will be referred to in Part II of this book. But provision for choirs and their training was made in connection with cathedrals all over the country. The first choir-

school was that founded for S. Paul's Cathedral, London, about 1042. After over eight and a half centuries it is still in existence and is a model of its kind ! The office of master of the choristers cannot be traced back so long, the first known instance being in the reign of Edward IV., 1473. Boys usually received their education and board, and when their voices broke often were awarded a bursary or "exhibition" to enable them to go to a great school and university. They also enjoyed some peculiar privileges. They could demand a fee from every newly installed officer of the church, and could levy "spur money" from all who attended the service in riding habit. In this latter case the wearer of the spurs could require the youthful tax-gatherer to sing his gamut (*i.e.* scale, especially that of G) perfectly. If he hesitated or failed he got no fee ! The boys of the Chapel Royal were the last to abandon this custom. Another privilege, though not confined to choir-boys, except in cathedrals, was very generally assigned to them, and largely for musical reasons. This was in connection with what surely was one of the most anomalous and absurd practices the Church has ever been responsible for—that of annually electing a "boy-bishop," who for three weeks ruled over his superiors and conducted every service but that of the Mass,



including preaching from the cathedral pulpit ! It is difficult to trace the custom to its origin. Warton finds germs of it as early as 876 A.D. in the Synod of Constantinople which anathematised (in vain !) the practice of dressing up laymen in episcopal apparel and personating bishops. Despite their several privileges choir-boys were often brutally treated, as we know from a poem written by Thomas Tusser (1523-80) and others.<sup>1</sup> And the election of a boy-bishop may have arisen from a crude sense of justice, and by way of a check on ill-tempered clerics and "masters of the children," through giving the boys an annual opportunity of retaliating on bullies ! At Salisbury, and possibly elsewhere, the boy-bishop had the presentation to any prebendal stall which fell vacant during his term of office ! The practice is said to have encouraged school work among the boys by giving them a foretaste of the sweets of office. Anyway, these bearn [*i.e.* bairn] bishops as they were called were appointed annually over the greater part of Europe, and though in Britain the custom was probably an importation, it took deep root. Not only did the cathedrals provide for this temporary puerile administration by Statute, in-

<sup>1</sup> From 1481 to 1643 both men and boys could be taken by compulsion for the Chapels Royal and certain cathedral choirs.



cluding rich episcopal vestments "handsome and elegantly shaped"—*vide* the York Capitulary Acts of 1367—but many parish churches placed themselves under the same jurisdiction from S. Nicholas' Day to Holy Innocents' Day—the annual period of the boy-bishop's reign. It hardly needs pointing out that Salisbury Cathedral did more than any other to form the musical "Use" of the Anglican Church, though other cathedrals had their local peculiarities—York, for instance. One of the many evidences of this is in the elaborate musical arrangements made for the institution of the chorister-bishop in the *Processionale* issued in 1566. In the year 1299 Edward I. permitted one of these boy-bishops to say vespers before him at his chapel at Heton near Newcastle-on-Tyne, and liberally rewarded the puerile prelate and other boys who had sung with him on the occasion. Forty years later Edward III. gave thirteen shillings and sixpence to one of these boy-bishops for singing before him in his chamber—so perhaps this was a secular performance. It will surprise many to know that the analogue of the boy-bishop, the girl-priestess, was not wholly wanting. For in the year 1278 an injunction was given to the Benedictine Nunnery of Godstone in Oxfordshire by Archbishop Peckham "*that on Innocents' Day the*

*public prayers should not any more be said in the church of that monastery per Parvulas, i.e. little girls."* The quotation is from Brand's Popular Antiquities, Vol. I, p. 428.

Music formed a large part of these absurd ceremonies both in the church and out of it, as we learn from a proclamation made by Henry VIII. on July 22, 1542, in suppression of them. "Children be straingelie decked and apparayled to counterfeit Priests, Bishops and women, and to be ledde with songes and dances from house to house, blessing the people, and gathering of money, and boyes do sing masse,<sup>1</sup> and preache in the pulpitt, with suche other unfittinge and inconvenient usages, rather to the derysyon than anie true glorie of God."

In Queen Mary's reign the practice was re-established and finally prohibited in that of Queen Elizabeth.

We cannot fully understand our own country without knowing something of neighbouring peoples. Mention must therefore be made of a custom, too barbaric for detail, whereby on the continent, chiefly in Italy but also in France and Germany, the soprano voice of boys was preserved against change to tenor or bass, and the treble

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps a later abuse, saying of Mass being an excepted office in most accounts.

compass retained with the power and interpretive maturity of a man's voice. This was done mainly with a view to operatic singers, and it is said that the manhood of four thousand boys was sacrificed annually to this vile pseudo-artistic Moloch.<sup>1</sup> The practice existed for ages and lingered on well into the nineteenth century. Despite ecclesiastical canons and a Papal Bull prohibiting the employment of artificial *soprani* in church choirs they were so employed largely, and Riemann tells us that *evirati*, as the Italians call them, were admitted into the Papal Chapel itself at the beginning of the nineteenth century! But though such singers visited our operatic stage I can find no trace of them in our church choirs.

Like many another institution that of the boy bishop achieved an end probably little dreamt of by those responsible for its beginnings. Such adepts did choir-boys become in acting that they were selected to perform in the mystery-plays, morality and miracle-plays which were such a prominent feature of town and even village life in the fourteenth and succeeding centuries. These began as liturgy plays given in the church. They were in Latin and dealt with events in the life of Christ. Some examples discovered by Professor Skeat have been published in Professor Manly's *Pro-*

<sup>1</sup> Authority: article Eunuch in Chambers' Encyclopædia.

*Shakespearean Drama.* The earliest instance may be dated 967, according to Mr. Ernest Rhys.<sup>1</sup> This is an important date, as it has been often assumed that we have no dramatic record of any kind in these islands earlier than the Norman Conquest! That event, indeed, seems to have assumed the character in many people's minds of what acousticians call a "node"—behind which they can see nothing! William the Conqueror sailed forth on trackless seas and what are now the British Isles kindly emerged from the depths of the ocean to afford him foothold! Thus Dr. Naumann quite seriously asks his readers to believe that "Poetry and song were introduced into England from Northern France"! About the close of the thirteenth century the liturgy-play outgrew the church and became a town pageant, each trade-guild making itself responsible for some particular play or scene. How great a place these plays took in the life of the people may be judged from the fact that, reckoning the scenes separately, York had fifty-four, Wakefield thirty-two, Chester twenty-four, Coventry forty-one. The place which music took in these "mysteries" is not easy to determine but was probably considerable. The experience which

<sup>1</sup> See Introduction to "Everyman and other Old Religious Plays."

<sup>2</sup> History of Music, p. 237.

choristers gained in these plays led to their ultimately taking part in the plays of Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, and other master-minds. For it must be remembered that till Charles II.'s time it was not customary, though it was not unknown, for women to take part in public performances, and so slow was the progress of the innovation that some seventy years later the treble part in Handel's oratorios was sung by boys!

Instruments have been used in Christian worship from almost the earliest times. A flute is known to have been used in celebrations of the Last Supper in 180 A.D.

Justin Martyr, born about 100 A.D. and Eusebius, born about 264 A.D., are quoted by Sir John Hawkins in his *History of Music* (Bk. IV. cap 32) as giving similar testimony.

"If you accompany your voices with the lyre or cithara," said Clemens Alexandrinus in the second century, "you will incur no censure." Augustine urged the "singing of psalms to the accompaniment of lyre or psaltery."

S. Ambrose (b. *cir.* 340 A.D.) employed instruments in the church at Milan with such effect that by degrees the practice became general. The first instrument which we hear of as being used in churches in Great Britain is the organ. An old manuscript known as the Utrecht Psalter,

generally supposed to be of the fifth or sixth century, indicates the existence of organs in England as early as the time of Augustine. This was before the introduction of organs into the Roman churches, which took place under Pope Vitalian in 666 A.D. But the well-known independence of the British churches is sufficient to account for this earlier action. Vitalian's missionaries, Theodore and Adrian, also are reputed to have brought the art of organ-playing to this country. Quite possibly they did so and found themselves to some extent forestalled. Still another claimant for the honour is to be found in Bishop Aldhelm (died 709 A.D.), who is said to have introduced an organ into England, "a mighty instrument with innumerable tones, blown with bellows, and enclosed in a gilded case." S. Dunstan, in the reign of King Edgar, caused one to be erected in the abbey at Glastonbury. S. Aldhelm three hundred years earlier had written of our Anglo-Saxon forefathers gilding the pipes of their organs. But it does not appear certain that they were used in churches. Three hundred years after Dunstan's time a large number of instruments, including organs, were used in churches, as we shall find in Part II, Cap 2. But a great objection was taken to this practice both in this country and abroad, and it appears to have

been discontinued, except in regard to organs, which were retained. These were usually small; there were several in a large church, and some were portable and were lent by one church to another for special occasions. For centuries the organ in churches was played by a priest or monk. But in 1473, and probably earlier, the office of master of the children, or as we should say choir-master, was established. Holy Orders were not necessary to the holder of it. And as we learn from Sanderson's *Antiquities of the Abbey or Cathedral Church of Durham*, one of the duties of its holder was to "play on the organs every principal day when the monks sang their high mass, and at evensong; but when the monks were at mattens, and service at midnight, one of them played on the organs himself, and none else." Hence though Tallis is the first lay organist whose name we know there were probably others before him. From the Statutes of Durham, revised in 1555, we learn that "the minor canons, clerks and other ministers of the church, choristers, grammar scholars, cooks and poor men shall use an upper vestment of the same colour . . . . the choristers, grammar scholars and under-cook two yards and a half at three shillings and fourpence."

Bells were used to summon people to church at



a very early period. Also for other purposes. S. Columba had one he called "God's Vengeance" on which oaths were taken. In 1870 a very old Celtic bell was found at Balnahannait in Glenlyon, Scotland. In England bells were rung on the death of Æthelwald in 905. This is, I think, the first notice of them in Anglo-Saxon annals. Other dates in regard to bells will be found in the Chronological Table (See Appendix).

Between two great centres of early Christian church music, Milan and Rome, a marked difference at one time existed. The singing at the former was taken part in by the whole congregation—S. Augustine refers to the intense impression made upon him by the great body of sound; in the Eternal City it was confined to a select body of singers. The rival systems were brought before the Council of Laodicea in 367 A.D., which decided that "None but the canons and the choir who sing out of the parchment books shall presume to sing in the church." In this matter, as in the system of chanting, Rome prevailed over Milan; and we must picture the singing as confined mainly to a choir of monks and boys in the great collegiate and monastic churches, and of laymen and boys in parish churches. At what period lay choir-men began to wear the surplice I cannot say. The white robe of the Druids was probably



much like a surplice. The word originally meant the outer robe worn over the fur garment of a bachelor. The Celts wore a garment of this kind over their sheep-skin clothing. The choir would be stationed in the chancel. The west end choir-gallery is a post-Reformation feature.

In pre-Reformation days the liturgy proper was wholly in Latin. But from time to time additions were made to it, and these being regarded as *ex liturgica* were sometimes in the vernacular. Thus on great festivals vernacular hymns were sung in Germany, and I should imagine in this country too. Chaucer wrote a hymn to the Blessed Virgin in English. And though the most famous of such hymns in his day, the *Angelus ad Virginem*, was in Latin, the oldest known copy includes an English translation, "Gabriel, from ebene king." Chaucer represents his poor Scholar as solacing himself with it. The music is extremely interesting as being the oldest known Anglo-Saxon sacred song, and also owing to its extreme tunefulness. On this account and because it is not to be found in the older histories we give it here. It is from the manuscript numbered 248 in the Arundel Collection, now in the British Museum, and was discovered by that prince of liturgical antiquarians, Mr. Henry Bradshaw. It was composed about 1250 A.D., not

many years after *Sumer is icumen in*, and therefore belongs to the First Period of the English School. The notes in the original are written with great exactitude over the syllables to which they are to be sung. But they are timeless, hence the rhythm can be only inferred from the verbal accents. These can be made to agree with the musical accents in both triple and quadruple time, and the hymn has been written in both by recent transcribers. But the tune seems to me to have so much more natural a swing in triple time than in quadruple that I give it that form. And this is confirmed by a harmonization of the tune in three parts which was made about a hundred and fifty years later, that is, near the end of the fourteenth century. Of course in the original there are no bar-lines, and while giving the same syllables to the same notes another editor, even though adhering to triple time, might give a somewhat different rhythm. In the three-part setting the melody is slightly different from the older version, having perhaps been altered to make it easier to harmonize.

## ANGELUS AD VIRGINEM

(Cir. 1250 : THE EARLIEST ANGLO-SAXON SACRED  
SONG KNOWN).

An...ge.....lus ad Vir...gi.....  
 ...nem, Sub.....in...trans in con.....  
 .....cla.....ve, Vir...gi.....  
 ...nis for.....mi....di....nem de..  
 mul.....cens inquit A.....ve,  
 A.....ve, Re.....gi.....na  
 vir.....gi.....num, Ce.....

li ter... re... que Do... mi...

num Cor... ci... pi... es, et

pa... ri... es in... tac...

ta Sa... lu... tem, ho... mi...

num, tu por... ta

ce... li fac...

ta, me... de... la cri...

mi... num

It will probably strike the reader that the pitch of the tune is rather high. This is because it is written in one of the old church "modes"—the Mixolydian, G to G in the modern scale of C Major, that is, without making F sharp. And before the introduction of inflected notes (sharps and flats) these modes could only be played on keyed instruments (which had no "black" notes) and could only be written at one pitch. But they could be *sung* at any pitch, and this tune was probably sung much lower than as here written. Men would sing it an octave lower anyway, and it is so placed in the three-part version, where, however, it contains two inflections.

One of the most curious of the liturgical excrescences which were evolved was the "trope," as to the nature and origin of which some little explanation is necessary.

In the early Christian Church there was a practice of speaking or singing with the spirit but without intelligible words, which has considerably puzzled commentators. S. Paul, it will be remembered, tells the Corinthians (1 Cor. xiv, 15) that he "will sing with the spirit and will sing with the understanding also." One of the most interesting facts in connection with the history of church music is that it exhibits a similar phenomenon as recurrent if not constant

through the ages, not excepting the present day : for those who can see below the surface find it in the fervour with which congregations sing meaningless words, or intelligible words which they don't mean, in our own generation. In the early church this phenomenon was frankly recognised and took the form of singing long melodies merely to some vowel sound. It is not known exactly when the practice began. But a high authority, Dr. W. H. Frere, thinks "it is possible that part, at any rate, of the revision which S. Gregory carried out was directed towards smoothing and curtailing these jubila,"<sup>1</sup> and he quotes a passage from John the Precentor (who, as already mentioned, came as a musical missionary to England in 680 A.D.) in support of this theory. Whether this be so or not, it became clear by the eighth or ninth century that singers were not contented with the amount of jubila which the Gregorian music-text contained, and began to supplement these by importing new ones. So, side by side with the old chant, but distinct from it, there grew up new musical phrases or complete melodies prefixed, intercalated, or appended to the recognised music-text. S. Austin, first Archbishop of Canterbury, 596 A.D., bears witness both to the natural inclination to sing merely to

<sup>1</sup> Introduction to the Winchester Troper : p. vii.

some vowel sound, and to the fact that it was a known thing in his day. The Gregorian *Antiphonale Missarum* recognises the same tendency and provides a good deal to satisfy the craving for melodies without words. Later on words were added to the jubila; and later still words and music were composed simultaneously. These additions accumulated till it became necessary to collect them into books separate from the original service books. Such a collection was called a Troper, or Troparion, and one of the most famous is the Winchester Troper, from which our frontispiece is taken (see also page 150). By the constitutions of Archbishop Winchelsey (1305 A.D.) it was required that every church in the province of Canterbury should be provided with a Legend, an Antiphonary, a Grail, a Psalter, a Troper, an Ordinal, a Missal and a Manual. The copying of choir-books was a matter of great labour, and the books consequently were very costly. Two Antiphonaries cost the monastery of Crabhuse in Norfolk twenty-six marks in the year 1424; a common Missal cost five marks—a year's income of a cleric at that time. In 1549 the number of books required, or in common use, had increased to twelve, so that substitution of a single "Booke of Common Praier" must have come as a financial relief. In the Roman

Catholic Church tropes were banished under the revision of the Latin service-books by the Council of Trent, unless they are regarded as surviving in one or two extant "Sequences." But some tropes had sufficient merit to preserve their existence in a separate form and there are two with which the reader is probably quite familiar, for they are frequently sung to the hymns *Of the Father's love begotten* and *O sons and daughters* (e.g. in *Hymns Ancient and Modern*, 1904 edition, Nos. 58 and 146).

Though I gather that the phenomenon was rare, Dr. Frere tells us that some of the later tropes were in English.

Carols were common at a very early period. At first the word meant a dance or dance-song, and it is used in this sense by Chaucer. The celebrated Boar's Head Carol is the most famous of the secular type, and probably dates from the time of Dunstable (*d.* 1453). But later on carols re-acquired a religious character (for carols on the Nativity are said to date from the fourth century, though not, I think, in this country). And these sacred carols were sometimes in Latin, sometimes in English, and frequently contained a mixture of both! This latter curious feature survives to the present day. Carols, therefore, more than anything else, are typical of the



transition stage in the language of worship.

The chief change wrought by the Reformation from a musical standpoint was in making the whole service vernacular and thus immensely increasing the possibilities of congregational singing. The English reformers were far more sympathetic to music than were those of Geneva. In great part they retained the old Plainsong but adapted it to English words. Tallis' Responses (where the Plainsong is mostly to be found, as was customary then, in the tenor part) and Marbeck's Communion Service are examples. (Tallis, it is believed, was only very lukewarm as a reformer, but Marbeck escaped martyrdom only by the intervention of powerful friends.) Both are heard in the farthest corner of the earth to which the Anglican Church has penetrated. New music also came to be written for the Kyrie, Creed, Sanctus and Gloria of the English Communion Service, which took the place of the Latin Mass, and for the Canticles at Morning and Evening Prayer, and has continued to be written since. Two new musical forms, the anthem and Anglican chant, also emerged. One might almost add the sacred cantata and oratorio, for though the seeds of these are to be found in pre-Reformation Passion music (the earliest extant example of which is English) and in the *Laudi Spirituali* of S. Phillip Neri, no great

development took place till a century and a half or so after the Reformation, and then it became phenomenal, but almost exclusively in countries predominantly Protestant. But the most striking musical effect of the Reformation is not to be found in the evolution of the largest form in which sacred music is cast, the oratorio, but, paradoxically enough, in one of the smallest—the hymn-tune. For the development of this has been colossal. In pre-Reformation days such a thing as a hymn-book was unknown.<sup>1</sup> The first Christian hymn-book was Luther's *Kirchenlieder*, issued in 1524. If we include metrical versions of the psalms under the title "hymns," the next of note was the Psalms of Marot and Beza, published in 1542, which went through edition after edition, and became "the Psalm-book of the Reformation." A facsimile of one of its pages appears on page 183. The first English psalter of note was that by Sternhold and Hopkins, published in 1548 or 1549 in London. This has no tunes: the first musical edition was issued in 1556 in Geneva by English reformers who had gone thither to escape the Marian persecution. Like the French psalter this book contained the melody only, and also was an epoch-making work. It contained the first instalment of those "church

<sup>1</sup> See, however, p. 141.

tunes," such as the "Old Hundredth," some of which at least have been sung in practically all Christian churches Sunday after Sunday from that day to this. For close on a century and a half this work remained in effect the authorised metrical psalm-book of the Anglican Church. Hymns as we now understand them were unknown at this time. None of the psalters mentioned so far contained all the psalms. The first one that did was an English work—the author being Robert Crowley, who published his book in 1549. Strange to say it provided only *one* tune—in form not unlike a double chant—for the whole of the psalms! Between the middle of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries no fewer than two hundred and twenty hymnals were published in Great Britain alone. A modern hymn-book sometimes contains over a thousand hymns, and approximately as many four-part tunes. Of a single hymnal, *Hymns Ancient and Modern*, twenty million copies were sold in less than twenty years. Only by realization of such facts as these can any adequate estimate be formed of the stupendous effect on popular musical development brought about by the adoption of the vernacular tongue as the language of worship. Nor did the Reformed churches only benefit by this movement. The Unreformed Church has largely increased her use

of hymns in the language of the people. Indeed, one writer has stated that the Roman Catholic Church uses no fewer than forty such hymns by a single author, Dr. Bonar, and he a Protestant.

Against the advantages to music arising from the great religious upheaval of the sixteenth century must be put the grave set-back caused by the dissolution of the monasteries. In their early days these institutions had been the centre of musical as of all other culture—the schools of the nation,—yet not, I think, quite so exclusively in regard to music as has usually been claimed for them. It is not, however, easy to determine what loss their disruption involved. For civilisation had outgrown its monastic cradle. The town had taken the place of castle and convent as a place of safety and nursery of the gentler arts. Moreover, if the monastic schools were gone, the cathedral choir schools remained. In saying this one need not, in respect of the first century or so after the Reformation, make an exception of Scotland. For though the cathedral system lapsed, the Sang-Scoles were for a time maintained; and despite the music taught in them having apparently been of a very rudimentary kind, they had these advantages over the English system, that they were not confined to cathedral cities, or their membership to church choirs.

In music, as in other things, extremes meet. The Fathers of the Genevan School prohibited all worship-music except unisonous psalm-tunes. The Fathers of the Council of Trent would have prohibited all but unisonous Plainsong had not the genius of Palestrina and the broadmindedness and artistic sympathies of the Pope averted such a disaster. The Anglican Reformers were much more statesmanlike and judicial than either of the extremists. Cranmer set the Litany in 1544 to "a sober and distinct note," but no artificial restriction was placed on musical development. A strong party, however, arose which was not satisfied with this discriminating and temperate attitude, and hankered after the drastic action of Geneva—the Rome of the Reformation, as it may be called. This party acquired the name of "Puritans" in Elizabeth's reign. And as early as 1562 they were so powerful that a motion in Convocation to put down organs and "curious singing" was lost by only one vote! Where a disciple of Geneva obtained church preferment the choral service was suppressed. A tract, *The Praise of Music*, says that about 1567 "not so few as 100 organs were taken down, and the pipes sold to make pewter dishes." In the homily on the "Place of Prayer" organs and "curious singing" are ranked with image worship.

The Commonwealth enabled the Puritans to show what they would do when possessed of power and a free hand. And as regards church music they used their opportunity ruthlessly. Most of the organs in England were destroyed. Not quite all. The York organ was one of the very few which escaped. A very fine new instrument had been erected in 1632 which inspired both pen and pencil. Thus the author of *An Account of a Tour Made Through a Great Part of England, A.D. 1634*, evidently regarded it as one of the wonders of the day :—"York ; there we saw and heard a faire, large, high organ, newly built, richly gilt, carved and painted ; and a deep and sweet snowy row of quiristers." The York organ stood unmolested, save by the ravages of time, for over a century and a half, for it was one of some half-dozen privileged instruments at the existence of which even Puritans winked. Moreover it was used as an adjunct to worship even during the Commonwealth, as we know from the curious pages of Master Thomas Mace's *Musick's Monument*. The author of this work was a lay-clerk (choirman) of Trinity College, Cambridge, before the Civil War, and an expert on the lute. He travelled considerably, going as far north as Scotland, and was shut up in York during the siege of 1644. This was fortunate for

posterity, as he gives us one of the only two accounts by contemporary musicians of Cathedral music during the Puritan ascendancy. The only other I can recall is that in which Magalotti speaks of the Psalm-singing at Exeter as "first by one alone, then by all together." "Now you must take notice," writes Mace, "that they then had a custom in that church (which I hear not of in any other Cathedral) which was that always before the sermon the whole congregation sang a Psalm, together with the Quire and the Organ; and you must know that there was then a most Excellent-large-plump-lusty-full-speaking- Organ which cost (as I am credible informed) a thousand pounds. This organ, I say (when the Psalm was set before the sermon) being let out into all its Fulness of Stops, together with the Quire began the Psalm. But when That vast-concording-Unity of the whole congregational-Chorus came (as I might say) Thundering in, even so as it made the very Ground shake under us; (Oh, the unutterable ravishing soul's delight!) in which I was so transported and wrapt up into High contemplations that there was no room left in my whole man—viz, Body, Soul and Spirit, for anything below Divine and Heavenly Raptures." Voluntaries were probably anathema at this period—at all events, Mace names neither music nor player;



but the organist who thus unconsciously made his mark on the pages of a contemporary chronicler was evidently James Hutchinson, who held office from 1633 to 1662.

Worse than the destruction of organs was the absolutely wanton destruction of choir-books, for in many instances these could not be replaced. In doing this, however, the soldiery were acting outside any instructions known to have been given them. To anyone combining a love of music with the historical and antiquarian sense, it is very difficult to speak temperately of this senseless waste of the irreplaceable treasures of past ages. But justice demands that one should remember the provocation under which the Puritans acted. In this great upheaval of Christendom we cannot entirely segregate our own country. And on the Continent composition had taken the form of absurd elaboration. Puzzle canons, in which an intricate and lengthy piece was represented by a few written notes only, were common. Josquin des Pres wrote a mass of this kind the solution of which was to be found in the numerals on a dice ! Masses were written on themes from not merely secular but obscene songs. Worse still, most of the choir sang the secular words while two or three prominent voices in the front row of the choir sang the liturgical



words.<sup>1</sup> To the everlasting credit of our British composers, they were guilty of neither senseless elaboration nor secularity. Only three English masses are known composed on a secular theme. It is the same theme in each case and the masses are believed to have been written by way of friendly competition. But our English Puritans, driven to Geneva by the Marian persecution, were naturally influenced by the drastic views of those among whom they found haven of refuge. And at home they had more than enough to cause a revulsion of feeling. Nobody who burlesques his own religion, or treats it with levity, can expect other people to respect it. And this was precisely what had been done. The puerilities which had been enacted in church in connection with the mystery plays, as described by Mr. J. C. Fillmore in a passage too long to quote here, are almost incredible, as are the buffooneries of the boy-bishop celebrations. In addition, fairs, with booths and dancing, were customarily held in the churchyards, even the porch being sometimes hired out by way of a market stall! The abuses in connection with the May Day celebrations, in themselves harmless, were appalling as given by contemporary writers. If the Puritan soldiery stabled their horses in

<sup>1</sup> Authority: article "Mass" by W. S. Rockstro, and "Palestrina" by E. H. Pember, K.C., in Grove's *Dictionary of Music and Musicians*.

churches, it was different and sterner, but not greater, irreverence than the same buildings had often been subjected to by those who ridiculed their iron-grey and severe view of life.

The Puritan did not object to music in itself, nor even to merry music, but only to instrumental and uncongregational music in connection with worship. The former objection he held in common with a large party in the church in the early centuries, and with the Greek Church to this day. He did not object even to dance tunes provided they were not danced to nor sung to the lewd words which were customary. Shakespeare in an oft quoted passage speaks of the Puritan who "sings psalms to hornpipes." So doing, the singer could, as we have already seen, claim precedents among the high priests of both Judaism and Christianity! Psalms were not the only things which Puritans adapted to secular songs. They were very fond of singing carols to them, though these were sometimes adaptations of psalms. So much so that Warton credits the Puritans with inventing the serious carol—erroneously, as the religious carol dates from the fourth century.

The leaders of Puritanism acted very differently from the less reputable of their followers. Milton's father had been a composer of repute in his day. The poet was himself an organist of some ability

and often played to Cromwell on an organ which had been removed to Hampton Court Palace from one of the Oxford colleges. The Protector appointed a Professor of Music at Oxford, and gave instructions for Cambridge University to confer a degree in music on Charles Colman—a strange proceeding if all music was suppressed, as several historians aver ! That sturdy Puritan John Bunyan in the second part of his *Pilgrim's Progress* represents the Interpreter as entertaining his guests with music during meals ; and Prudence, Christiana and Mercy as playing on the virginals, viol and lute. Bunyan played on a flute which his jailor could never find—for he had cut it out of a leg of his prison chair ! Evelyn the diarist records matters of musical importance eleven times : being a zealous Royalist he would certainly have noted the fact had he in his journey through England found music languishing. In view of the Puritan horror of stage plays it speaks volumes for their appreciation of music itself that opera was tolerated if not actually encouraged ! Yet so it was. Moreover, for a time there was actually a daily performance of opera ! The chief of these works were the *Siege of Rhodes*, in which a Mrs. Colman took the part of Ianthé and is therefore said to be the first woman to appear in public as an actress ; *The Cruelty of the Spaniards in Peru*.

and *The History of Sir Francis Drake*. It has been suggested that Cromwell had a political purpose in these anti-Spanish and naval subjects. Perhaps so, but there can be no doubt of his great fondness for music on its own account. He was the first of our rulers to establish regular State concerts. And during the last ten years of his rule thirty-four new books or reprints of or on music were published, a large number for that period. Also the first regular music publisher, John Playford, established himself. Of the books referred to, *The English Dancing Master*, which became a classic in its way, was one; most of the books are instrumental works, and only two are psalm-tune books. This proportion of sacred works to secular is symptomatic, and goes far to confirm Mr. Henry Davey's dictum that under the Puritan regime sacred music languished, secular flourished.

## PART II

# TECHNICAL

### CHAPTER I

#### THE EARLY EMINENCE OF GREAT BRITAIN FOR MUSIC.

IN the ages preceding Christianity one of the first nations to acquire a world-wide fame for its religious music was the Jewish people: hence the Babylonians demanded of their Hebrew captives that they should “sing us one of the songs of Zion.” Among Christian peoples the Italians, and particularly the cities of Milan and Rome, were the first to win for themselves a similar reputation. But the first nation, leastways in the West, to be assigned by its neighbours to a position of special honour in regard to its secular music, its folk-song, was apparently a British people—the Irish. And as we shall see, though they had not originated the chief school of Christian Church song, the *Cantus Romanus*, Irish monks were among its earliest and most expert students and disseminators. Where the first ecclesiastical experiments in harmony were made is not easy to determine

with certainty. Claims have been lodged on behalf of both Spain, Ireland and Flanders, and the last named country holds the record for the earliest written examples. But the first country to become pre-eminent for a distinct school of harmonic church composition was France—or rather Paris, which, as has already been pointed out, enjoyed this distinction during the period of which the twelfth century is the centre. Nevertheless we shall find that if France was first, Great Britain, even in respect of academic composition, was not very far behind.

The earliest known scale system in Europe was that which Ambrose and Gregory had borrowed from the Greeks, who in turn are believed to have borrowed it from the Egyptians. It was spread over Europe in the seventh and eighth centuries among others, as we have already seen, by Irish monks, and in the seventh and eighth centuries by musical missionaries under Charlemagne. That energetic king's chief assistant in this work was a British musician named Alcuin. As a boy he had entered S. Mary's Abbey, York; and how high a place our country held among the nations for its learning and culture may be learned from what a German poet wrote of him:

“’Twas he transported Britain's richest ware,  
Language and arts, and kindly taught them here.”

The self-reproach of Caedmon at his inability to take part in the harp-playing which usually followed banquets, and the well-known story of Alfred the Great's ruse in the Danish camp, are evidences of Anglo-Saxon musical culture at this period. That Alfred's appointing one "John" as Professor of Music in the University of Oxford "is a myth," as it has been called by a recent historian, rather enhances the evidential value of the statement than otherwise. For a fact can live in a vacuum and may bear witness to nothing, but a myth requires atmosphere and bespeaks many things: such a legend could only germinate and flourish among a people whose musical reputation was very high. On this account one is quite loth to add that the "myth" in this case is a very substantial one, being founded on the chronicles of the Church of Winchester, which name Friar John of S. David's as the first occupant of the chair. The same may be said of the remarkable musical achievements ascribed, especially by some continental writers, to S. Dunstan—among them the authorship of several of the so-called "Gregorian" chants.

In Archbishop Dunstan we English may claim the first and only male musician whom the Church has been bold enough to canonize—unless we



regard S. Odo of Clugny as sufficiently musical to share the honour. But the supreme test of musicianship lies in composition. And whether we take vocal or instrumental music, melodic or harmonic forms, folk-music, or the elaborated work of academic musicians, we shall find the British Isles, or some part of them, among the pioneers. It was by Irish monks that S. Dunstan was educated, and to the Irish monks of the Abbey of S. Gall, in Switzerland, founded in 613 A.D., and the music school of which became the "wonder and delight of Europe," that musical education in the West is largely due. During the eighth century, according to hymnologists of the first rank, the Irish cycle of hymns superseded the Benedictine *Cursus* and became the use of the whole Western Church.<sup>1</sup> In 870 Moengal, an Irish monk who was headmaster of the music-school at S. Gall, gave S. Notker the first pattern "Alleluia," and thus may be regarded as the inventor of sequences or tropes; and these, in their turn, materially influenced the early drama.

The oldest known instrumental melody in the world, if we may trust tradition, is British. It is the Welsh tune<sup>2</sup> already quoted, and which

<sup>1</sup> I am unaware of these hymns having been collected in one book: see page 128.

<sup>2</sup> It was published in 1857 by the Cymroddorian Society.



is said to have been played at the somewhat mythical court of King Arthur. The earliest *copy* of a piece of instrumental music is English, namely, the MS. of the Country Dance in the Bodleian Library, the date of which is believed to be A.D. 1280, and an extract from which is given in Part I, Chapter vi.

All mediæval writers who refer to instrumental music speak of that in some part of Great Britain as being of exceptional excellence. Thus the only European people who may claim to share with India the invention of the most subtle and delicate means of eliciting sound the world knows—the use of a bow on a string—are the Welsh, who used a bow in playing the *crwyth*. The Irish, however, claim to have shared the usage with them as early as the sixth century, and to have introduced the harp, fiddle, and bagpipe on the Continent in the seventh and eighth centuries.<sup>1</sup> Apart from this, the bow was introduced into Europe by the Crusaders. And the first European illustration of a bow is to be found in the Cotton MS., the author of which, though the point is not absolutely certain, was, in all probability, an Englishman.<sup>2</sup> And England stood as high in the service

<sup>1</sup> See "The Irish Influence on Music in the Middle Ages," by Dr. W. H. Grattan Flood, in *The Ave Maria*, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> For list of instruments mentioned, see Chronological Table under Eleventh Century.

of the King of Instruments as of the Queen. The organ is mentioned in Aldhelm's poem "De Laude Virginitatis," written before 709 A.D. Dunstan, as we have seen, made an organ "with brass pipes," and furnished several abbeys with instruments; and the huge organ built at Winchester by Bishop Elphege, who died in 951, appears to have been one of the wonders of the world at the time. It had 400 pipes,<sup>1</sup> 26 pairs of bellows, and took 70 men to blow it!

Ailred, Abbot of Rivaulx, Yorkshire, writing about 1150, asks indignantly "Whence hath the Church so many Organs and Musical Instruments? . . . In the meantime, the common people standing by, trembling and astonished, admire the sound of the Organs, and noyse of the Cymballs and Musicall Instruments, the harmony of the Pipes and Cornets." And Giraldus Cambrensis, in his account of Ireland written a few years later, finds that Hibernia has maintained its early reputation, for "in musical instruments that nation is incomparably superior to every nation we have seen. For the performance is not heavy and gloomy (as among the Britons, to whom we are accustomed), but is rapid and dashing, yet a gentle and pleasing tone-effect. . . It is astonishing that

<sup>1</sup> With this number it will perhaps gratify our modern conceit to compare the 10,059 in the 1904 St. Louis Exposition organ.

<sup>2</sup> *Speculum Charitatis*; Prynne's translation.

in so great a rapidity of fingering, musical proportion should be retained, and art in everything satisfied through involved changes and harmonies of manifold complication." Giraldus adds that Scotland and Wales were then striving to equal Ireland, and in the opinion of many Scotland had not only equalled, but far surpassed, its teacher. The instruments in use by the Irish were the cithara and tympanum, to which the Welsh added the tibiae, and both Welsh and Scots the "chorus," but the nature of only the cithara is definitely known in the present day. Mr. Henry Davey<sup>1</sup> believes that the tympanum, and another writer that the "chorus," was the bagpipe.

Two hundred years after Abbot Ailred had laid down his pen, Froissart tells us how in 1347 Edward III. and his company entered Calais "with a great abundance of minstrels ('menes-trandies'), of trumpets, of drums, of kettledrums, of reed pipes ('chalemies'), and of bagpipes." No mean military band in those days! The introduction of the drum into Europe is involved in much obscurity, but this passage is the first clear evidence of its use.

<sup>1</sup> *History of English Music*, p. 22.

## CHAPTER II

### BRITAIN'S SHARE IN THE EVOLUTION OF HARMONY.

#### THE EARLIEST KNOWN SECULAR PART-SINGING.

A FEATURE of incalculable importance distinguishes the modern from the ancient, and the Western from the Eastern, world. This is harmony, or the art of combining sounds<sup>1</sup>; and the first known instance in the world of two or more notes being sung simultaneously by secular musicians is British. Giraldus Cambrensis, already quoted, declares in his "*Descriptio Cambriæ*" that "the Welsh do not sing their tunes in unison as other nations do, but in harmony, so that there are as many different parts as there are singers." The construction of the ancient Welsh violin, or *crwyth*, affords further evidence of the British origin of chordal music. "Harmony of some sort," says Sir F. A. G. Ouseley, "must result from the use of this instrument" when tuned as he shows it to have been. Giraldus also tells us that "the inhabitants of northern England

<sup>1</sup> This view is that taken by most historians: the author must confess a serious doubt as to whether the music of the ancients was wholly unisonous.

sing in two parts, even the children falling into this practice." Giralduſ had travelled widely, repeatedly viſiting France and Italy. His comparison of Britain with other countries is, therefore, no mere guess.

If, deſpite this Welch and Northern Engliſh part-ſinging, we follow the majority of hiſtorians in regarding harmony as being ſolely of eccleſiaſtical origin, Britain ſtill, if ſhe does not lead all other nations, is at leaſt in the forefront.<sup>1</sup> The Venerable Bede about 675 wrote treatiſes on theoretical and practical muſic. In one of theſe he tells us that "a deſt harper in drawing up the chords of his inſtrument tunes them to ſuch pitches that the higher may agree in harmony with the lower, ſome differing by a ſemitone, a tone, or two tones; others yielding the conſonance of the diateſſaron, diapento or diapason" (*i.e.* the fourth, fifth, and octave). It is impoſſible not to believe that the notes forming theſe conſonant intervals were ſometimes ſounded together, thus making harmony.

A paſſage in the *Diviſio Naturæ* of the Iriſh writer Duns Scotus Erigena, who died in 875 A.D.,

<sup>1</sup> In ſaying this, I aſſume that Iſidore of Seville uſed the terms "Symphony" and "Diaphony" in the ſame ſenſe as the Greeks, to whom intervals and chords meant notes in ſucceſſion. If Dr. Ritter is correct in attaching to them the meaning they afterwards are found to poſſeſs, of notes in combination, then Spain muſt be credited with a crude harmony in the ſixth century—ſome four hundred years earlier than any other country.

seems to forecast the methods of free organum some hundred and fifty years before we find written examples of it. Thus it is to British writers that the world owes the first literary references to ecclesiastical as well as secular harmony. The first unquestionable example of harmony is the work of a tenth century monk, apparently Flemish, formerly known to historians simply as Huckbald, but now known as Pseudo-Huckbald, or, as some think, Abbas Otger. But England can show an example which probably existed as early, though it is not known to have been written down till somewhat later. For Winchester boasts a Troper dating from the tenth century which contains both Plainsong melodies and the "organa" which were to be sung to them. "The term (organa) is used here and in many other places at this date as the equivalent of diaphony, that is, early part-music, or what was at a later period known as descant. This collection (the two MSS. forming the Winchester Troper) is the most considerable practical document which has yet come to light on the subject of early harmony . . . . in the writings of the later tenth century we see that a great step forward has been made. The *Musica Enchiriadis* (a treatise formerly attributed to the Flemish monk Huckbald, who died in

930, but now believed to have been written by Abbas Otger, at a later date) and its companion dialogue the *Schola Enchiriadis* (same probable author) show how the three great concords, fourth, fifth, and octave, pointed the way to doubling a whole melody at the fifth, fourth (*i.e.* inverted fifth) and octave, and thus singing in parts . . . . . and then went on to give rules for the combining of two organa with one principalis and for modifying the symphonia, diatessaron, or diaphony at the fourth, so as to avoid harshness. This modification is the first step towards real harmony as opposed to a mere reproduction of the same melody at another pitch. . . . . Another form of modification had to be made owing to the limitation of the downward range of the vox organalis, and thus by developing the principle of a 'pedal' also led in the same direction towards real and free harmony, one part standing still while the other moved. Here we have practically the principles of similar and oblique motion in germ.

"In Guido of Arezzo (*cir.* 1020) the same system is found with possibly some little development of the harmonic sense but no distinct advance: for that we have to wait till John Cotton (perhaps *cir.* 1050), who in the twenty-third chapter of his *Musica* definitely set forth the



advantages of contrary motion, and so put the art of diaphony on a comparatively modern basis [the nationality of John Cotton is not absolutely certain, but, as pointed out elsewhere, the high probability is that he was an Englishman]. The Winchester Organa exhibit all the three kinds of harmonic motion. In the Sequence melodies, for example, two clear instances of contrary motion occur in the Alleluia of the first melody, but it is the exception, and the vox organalis proceeds mainly by oblique motion or by similar motion probably a fourth below the vox principalis.”<sup>1</sup> It is extracts from two parts of this Troper which form our frontispiece. They represent the Gregorian melody to the Tract *Commovisti* and the “organa” which were to be sung with it, and are the first known British examples of part-writing in existence, and nearly the earliest in the world. The original photograph was taken, with several others, by the Rev. Dr. W. H. Frere, of the House of the Resurrection, Mirfield, and I welcome an opportunity of publicly acknowledging my indebtedness to him for his kind permission to reproduce it. And it is to a similar courtesy on the part of Sir W. H. Hadow and the Clarendon Press that the

<sup>1</sup> Dr. W. H. Frere: Introduction to the Winchester Troper; Henry Bradshaw Society, Vol. VIII, 1894.



following example of part-writing from the same manuscript appears here.<sup>1</sup> It is chosen as containing "contrary motion"; only the relative, not absolute, pitch of the organum can be determined, hence the absence of a clef.



The double treble clef is a modern device the inventor of which I cannot trace: it indicates the treble clef read an octave lower. The contrary motion is indicated by slurs: it shows an extraordinary degree of advancement for the period. Much longer examples from the slightly earlier Flemish works just referred to contain it only in the last two notes.

Fosbroke, in his "British Monachism,"<sup>2</sup> gives an account of the singing of the Anglo-Saxon monks which can only be interpreted as a description not merely of part-singing, but of imitative polyphony. Their song consisted of a method of

<sup>1</sup> See the Oxford History of Music, Vol. I, p. 76.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. II, p. 113, as quoted by Mr. Rockstro in Grove's "Dictionary of Music," Vol. IV, p. 3.

figurate Discant<sup>1</sup> in which the various voices, following one another, were perpetually repeating different words at the same time.

Ethelred, or Ailred (1109-66), Abbot of Rivaulx Abbey, Yorkshire, writing of his own day, gives testimony very similar. Protesting, with as much vehemence as the Puritans of a later day, against over-elaboration of Church music, he complains that "this man sings a bass, that a small mean, another a treble, a fourth divides and cuts asunder, as it were, certain middle notes." All of which suggests four voice-parts of considerable independence. John of Salisbury wrote in a similar strain, but his musical references are too vague to be understood as anything more than a protest against elaboration.

According to an anonymous author<sup>2</sup> writing about 1189, it is due to organists in "that part of England which is called West-country" that the discovery of the true tuning and qualities of the interval known as a "third" is due. As a consequence of this West English feeling for euphony the old "organum" or accompaniment in fourths and fifths was superseded, at first in England and afterwards abroad, by a succession of thirds and sixths. The innovation scandalised the purists,

<sup>1</sup> That is, the notes had time-*values*: Franco, writing about A.D. 1200, refers to such notes as previously existent.

<sup>2</sup> The Bury St. Edmunds treatise, now in the Royal MSS.

who regarded it as an offence against austerity, and called it *Faux-bourdon*, or false bass. But its ultimate effect in furthering harmonic development would be difficult to over-estimate.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The English origin of the *Faux-bourdon* is admitted not only by our own, but German historians—Dr. Riemann, for instance.

## CHAPTER III

### BRITAIN'S SHARE IN THE EVOLUTION OF COUNTER- POINT.

“SUMER IS ICUMEN IN”: THE WORLD'S MOST  
REMARKABLE MUSICAL MANUSCRIPT.

COMPOSITION, as we understand it, was totally unknown to the earlier fathers of liturgical harmony. Whether the intervals they used were fourths and fifths or thirds and sixths, the accompanying voices remained at a uniform distance from the plain-song chant, and moved in parallel motion with it. No such mechanical accompaniment could for ever satisfy even those whose whole life was one long observance of rule. The first break with this system in all likelihood came from the Parisian School. But if the invention of Counterpoint—the writing of independent simultaneous melodies—is probably due to an unknown Frenchman, the first explanation and examples of Double Counterpoint—melodies which may be sung either above or below the *cantus firmus*—certainly come from John Garland, “Johannes de Garlandia.” And he himself tells us that he was

born in England<sup>1</sup> (about 1180, apparently in Devonshire), and studied at Oxford before going to Paris. The inversion of melodies is essential to all the higher forms of polyphony, and Garlandia's work forms the second step in that ladder the summit of which was reached five centuries later in the majestic fugues of Bach and Handel.

But even Garlandia's achievement pales before that of a contemporary and fellow countryman, whose work was copied early in the thirteenth century by John Fornsete, Cartulary at the Abbey of Reading, who may have been also the composer, but this is by no means certain. The reference is, of course, to the famous Rota, or Round, "Sumer is icumen in." One must abandon as hopeless any attempt to do justice to this MS.—the most remarkable in the world's musical paleography—within the space available. Suffice it to say that the Round is in six independent parts, four of which are in strict canon, that is, they are in one of the most stringent and exacting forms of imitative writing known even in the twentieth century; the remaining two voices sing a peculiar two-chord species of drone-bass. Such a

<sup>1</sup> He has frequently been confused with Gerlandus of Besancon, who flourished about 1150, and his English origin overlooked. Coussemaker corrects the error in the third volume of his invaluable history, but it still often reappears.

combination is, to quote a German writer on the subject, "infinitely more ingenious than the common canon."<sup>1</sup> The severer the criticism, English and foreign, to which the MS. has been subjected, the more firmly has its authenticity been established. Microscopic examination has recently shown how accurately its age had been estimated, for it has revealed the two dates, 1226 and 1236, previously overlooked.

To enter into all the problems, solutions, refutations and counter-solutions to which this scrap of vellum, a little over seven inches by five, has given rise is impossible. And none of the explanations remove, few even modify, the difficulty of accounting for so advanced a composition at so early a period; they only change it. Unless, therefore, the composer of this Rota produced a work further ahead of his age than any other composer before or since is known to have done, we must conclude that the standard of musical attainment at this time, leastways in England, was far higher than would otherwise be supposed.

It is true that all known examples for some two hundred years after the Rota are against the estimate of thirteenth century attainment suggested by this marvellous work; but in pointing this out historians have attached too little

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Emil Naumann, "History of Music," Vol. II, p. 286.

importance to literary references, and too much to our ignorance of other equally good examples in musical notation. While in the thirteenth century music itself was thousands of years old, the art of *writing* it was almost in its infancy, and confined to the cloistered musician. Two of the most musical nations of antiquity, the Egyptians and Jews, are not known to have had any musical notation whatever. For centuries music, like early Greek philosophy, was independent of the pen. Consequently, while there are early *records* of great musical activity in England, there are but few specimens of it. Thus it is evident from a Latin poem by Archdeacon William Mapes that rounds and canons were not only existent, but common, half a century—and probably longer—before the Rota was written. Yet no other specimen of a Round is forthcoming for more than two hundred and fifty years after it, when one was composed in honour of John Norman on his being made Lord Mayor of London in 1453. This little round is interesting not only on account of its being the oldest but one in existence, and of its natural, easy flow and tunefulness, but as evidence of the cultivation of part-music by the working classes. For it was made by the Watermen of London in celebration of Sir John Norman having commenced the custom,

which became an established one, of going to Westminster in his barge to be sworn into his office of Lord Mayor, instead of going on horseback as heretofore had been done. On singing it over the reader will probably be surprised by its familiarity, since it has been one of the most popular of rounds for over four hundred and sixty years. Nowadays it is often sung to the words "Turn again, Whittington."

### THAMES WATERMEN'S ROUND: 1453

Heave and ho, rum... be... low,

\*  
Row the boat, Nor... man, row.

Row to thy Le... man

The music is like church bells and was quite probably suggested by them. "Leman" means "loved one" and shows the affection with which the bargees believed Norman regarded the city through which their river ran.

Mr. Henry Davey, in a detailed survey of this



period, enumerated some eighteen British musical manuscripts, only seven of which contain more than one item, and almost all of which are sacred music. Obviously, then, the specimens known to us are too few, and confined too closely to monastic musicians, to be safely taken as necessarily representative of the whole ; and the renowned Rota was probably not the only one, even if the only written example, of its kind, and quite possibly even of its quality.

This high estimate of thirteenth century English music is confirmed by the remarkable achievements in composition of the famous theorist Walter Odington, who, like the copyist of the Rota, was a monk of Evesham.

In this connection Dr. Naumann gives an amusing example of the Teutonic obsession that musically no good thing can come out of England, and of the quagmire of inconsistency into which jealousy is sure to lead its victims. Those familiar with his otherwise excellent History will remember that he declares that the only place from which the Rota might have been expected to come was Paris. And similarly, unable to deny the "astonishing skill" (the words are his own) of the great Evesham composer, he proceeds to solemnly inform us that Odington, "although an Englishman, must be looked upon as a disciple of the old

French school, his compositions unmistakably bearing evidence of the Parisian masters.”<sup>1</sup> The Gallic influence must have been exercised *per scripta in absentia*, for as Naumann himself points out twelve pages previously (in a different connection) “of Odington it is not even known that he ever visited Paris.”<sup>2</sup>

It is not known by whom the form of composition known as a canon, round, or rota, was invented; but Reissmann, in his History of Music, considers it as very probable that the Faux-bourdon, an undeniably British invention, prepared the way for it; canons are admitted by all writers to have been a popular form of music in England in the thirteenth century; and, says Naumann, “it was the English who invented that *endless canon* which is so great a favourite with all people even to-day.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “History of Music,” p. 283.

<sup>2</sup> “History of Music,” p. 276, footnote.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 286.

## CHAPTER IV

### BRITAIN'S SHARE IN EVOLVING THE ART OF COMPOSITION.

JOHN DUNSTABLE: "THE MOST REMARKABLE  
FIGURE IN THE WHOLE HISTORY OF MUSIC."

MANY and steep as had been the steps of Britain's ascent up the ladder of music, she was yet to eclipse them all. The supreme art of the musician, composition, has not been wholly evolved by any one man or nation. But John Dunstable, born probably at Dunstable, in Bedfordshire, about 1380, gave so new a meaning to the term and advanced the art so far, that he has been called the "inventor of composition," not by English writers only but foreign. Thus the Belgian, Tinctore, author of the first known musical dictionary, published in 1475, says: "The source and origin of this new art, if I may so speak, is to be found among the English, of whom the chief musician was Dunstable." The German poet, John Nucius, quoted Sebastian Heyden and "divers others" as expressing a similar opinion.

Perhaps even more significant is the fact that a Spanish writer whose manuscript is dated 1480 regards the history of music as beginning with Dunstable—leastways, he is the first composer mentioned. And the widely dispersed sources from which these encomiums come, and the many nations among whom fragments of his music are to be found, go far to show that John of Walthamstead, Abbot of St. Alban's, was indulging in no mere rhetorical figure when he declared in an epitaph that Dunstable "dispensed the knowledge of music through the world." Dunstable died in 1453, and was buried in St. Stephen's Church, Walbrook, where a monument to him will be found, replacing one destroyed by fire. Dunstable was not only the greatest composer in the world in his own day, but, it has been truly said, in some respects "the most remarkable figure in the whole history of music." England in Dunstable's day was undoubtedly the most musical country in the world.

Scotland, too, would seem to have added a stone to the cairn of composition at this time. The eighteen years' exile which James I. of Scotland underwent in England, and during which he received his education, took place during Dunstable's time. James was undoubtedly the ablest of the Stewarts, all of whom were musical; he

was a skilful player on the harp and lute and other instruments, and "found out of himself a new style of music, plaintive and mournful, differing from every other." Unfortunately Tassoni, from whom the quotation is made, does not say whether the innovation was harmonic or melodic. Evidently, however, it was of sufficient importance for word of it to have reached Italy, for there is no evidence of Tassoni having visited this country.

But the prophet's mantle did not fall on his own countrymen. The Belgians appreciated Dunstable, or at least understood his principles, better than we did, and for half a century or so, 1480-1530, Flemish composers were undoubtedly the world's masters in music. Britons, however, leastways Irishmen, instead of being humiliated by the success of their rivals, may justly feel a pride less only than they would in the triumph of purely native composers. For in 653 A.D., S. Gertrude, Abbess of Nivelles, in Brabant, sent for two Irish monks, S. Foillan and S. Ultan, to teach psalmody to her nuns. These two musical sons of Erin, willingly accepting the invitation, built an adjoining monastery for themselves at Fosse in the diocese of Liège. And this foundation was the beginning of the cult of music in Belgium!

## CHAPTER V

### BRITAIN'S SHAPE IN THE EVOLUTION OF INSTRUMENTAL FORMS. EMINENCE OF BRITISH MUSICIANS ON THE CONTINENT.

ALBION, as it proved, had fallen to second place in one form of composition only to spring forward in another; for the fates had decreed that England was to be pioneer nation in the composition, not only of polyphonic vocal music, but instrumental. Ireland, Scotland and Wales, it will be remembered, had already acquired fame for their skill on wind and string instruments. England achieved hers more particularly in regard to keyboard music. Taken collectively, this instrumental pre-eminence of the four nations is the more remarkable since it is precisely in regard to orchestral music that for some hundred and fifty years the British Isles have been most signally deficient.

Such was the proficiency of the early sixteenth century English composers for the virginal, spinet and harpsichord, that though it is not known by whom a keyboard was first attached to a string

instrument, foreign writers as well as British agree that it was probably in this country.

About 1460 Conrad Paumann, a blind organist of Nuremberg, produced some fragments for the organ which show a certain groping after independence of vocal forms. With this exception, the virginal music of Hugh Aston, or Ashton, Aystown, or Austen, as his name variously appears in different manuscripts, who flourished from about 1500-1520, and of some anonymous contemporaries, to be found in the "Fayrfax Book" (Royal MSS. Ap. 58), is the earliest instrumental music for which the term composition is at all appropriate. Mr. Davey regards the music of Aston alone as enabling England to claim "the glory of having invented instrumental as well as vocal composition."<sup>1</sup> In reading this one cannot entirely suppress a suspicion that he weakens his case by over-stating it. But the length of the pieces in the "Fayrfax Book"—some are in variation form—their scale passages, rhythmic originality and non-vocal efforts, justify us in saying that at this period English makers of music did more to lay the foundations of a purely instrumental style than those of any other nation.

Monumental evidence of England's supremacy on the keyboard exists in the magnificent MS.

<sup>1</sup> "History of English Music," pp. 78, 96.

collection of clavier music popularly known as "Queen Elizabeth's," but more correctly as the "Fitzwilliam" Virginal Book.<sup>1</sup> There is no other such collection in the world. "Parthenia, or the Maydenhead of the first musick that ever was printed for the Virginalls," published in 1611, should also be mentioned. It was frequently reprinted and was the first music of any kind produced from engraved plates. The English instrumental school of the sixteenth century was the germ, by the admission of Teutonic writers themselves, from which sprang the modern orchestral school. During a great part of the sixteenth century England was for the second time in the forefront of musical nations, and English instrumentalists were in as great demand abroad as foreign musicians have been since in Great Britain. That quaint writer Coryat, speaking of opera early in the seventeenth century, said that the Venetian actors could "not compare with ours for music." The works of the famous lutenist, John Dowland, 1562-1626, were printed at Paris, Antwerp, Cologne, Heidelberg, Nuremberg, Frankfort, Leipzig, Amsterdam, Utrecht and Hamburg. The Fansies,

<sup>1</sup> The book on "The Sources of Keyboard Music in England," by the Belgian Professor, Charles van der Borren, recently published, is mainly founded on this MS.



Court Ayres, Sutes, and Jiggs which John Jenkins, born at Maidstone in 1592, composed "by horseloads," to quote Roger North, proved ephemeral, but during their short life they were immensely popular everywhere, and acquired for their author almost a European reputation. Hawkins says that Jenkins' "Twelve Sonatas for two Violins and a Base with a thorough Base for the Organ or Theorbo" were reprinted at Amsterdam in 1664—four years after their appearance in this country. Perhaps it should be added that, being unable to verify it, Mr. Davey doubts the statement. Jenkins' vocal works were less successful, but the reader has probably sung one of them—the spirited little round "A boat, a boat, haste to the ferry." When this 'little man with a great soul,' as Anthony Wood calls Jenkins, was twenty-two years of age there was born one who, if he added less in bulk, added stones of a more durable quality to the cairn of England's eminence in instrumental music. This was Benjamin Rogers, whose compositions were held in high esteem in Sweden, Holland and Austria, as well as in his native land. In Austria his Twelve Fancies for viols and organ were regarded as "the best music that *could* be made." Like Jenkins, though best known in his lifetime for his long instrumental pieces he is best

remembered after it by a short vocal one. His *Hymnus Eucharisticus* is sung every May morning from the tower of Magdalen College, Oxford; and one verse of it every day as a grace at the College dinner.

Perhaps it should be explained that a "Fancy" was a composition in which the composer followed his own fancy instead of merely writing variations on a well-known theme.

Max Seiffert, writing in 1891, pointed out that a contemporary of Rogers, Samuel Scheidt, living at Halle, received at once the Italian forms from Southward, and English execution from Northward, and from their union originated the great German instrumental school.

Nor was it only in the more classical of instrumental forms that Great Britain was to the fore. Of all moulds in which music is cast the march is undoubtedly the most popular; and the first example in regular rhythmical phrasing is the well-known and beautiful Cambrian war-song "The March of the Men of Harlech," which Llwyd, "the Bard of Snowdon," tells us originated during the siege of Harlech Castle in 1468. If this is correct—some authorities question the statement—Dr. Crotch was justified in his encomium that "the military music of the Welsh is superior to that of any other nation."

It is evident that from a very early date the English, as well as Welsh, were famous for their military music, as one gathers from the impression, already mentioned, which Edward III.'s band made on Froissart; and especially for their military march; for in a royal warrant Charles I., speaking of "the ancient custome of nations" in the use of national marches, refers to "the ancient gravity and majestie" of "the march of this our nation, so famous . . . being by the approbation of strangers themselves confessed and acknowledged the best of all marches." Unfortunately the melody—which may have varied—has not come down to us; but the rhythm, a very monotonous one to modern ears, has. It was "beaten in the presence" of the King's "late deare brother, Prince Henry," at Greenwich, in 1610; and, to restore accuracy and secure permanence, was given in musical notation in the warrant referred to. The pace was evidently slower than that of most military marches. Charles I., we see, spoke of its "gravity and majestie." A French Marshal of Queen Elizabeth's time, named Biron, had been less complimentary, and derided it as "slow, heavy and sluggish," the march of his own country being brisk and alert. "That may be true," retorted Sir Roger Williams, one of Elizabeth's soldiers,

“but slow as it is, it has traversed your master’s country from one end to the other.”

Returning to the question of national precedence in music : in 1562 Palestrina produced his famous *Missa Papae Marcelli*, and Italy may be regarded as having then entered on her long supremacy, to be followed in the early eighteenth century by Germany. Nevertheless, during the later sixteenth and early seventeenth century the English school stood extremely high. For though the greatest compliment that could be paid to its most distinguished master, Orlando Gibbons, was to call him “the English Palestrina,” he was, dramatic music apart, the ablest musician of his time (1583–1625) in Europe. It is noteworthy, too, as the Bohemian historian, Ambros, points out, that we English have taken a greater and more continuous delight in the music of the Elizabethan composers than any other nation in its older music-makers. Of music composed between 1550 and 1630 it is only the English which has secured a permanent hold, and been performed through three centuries.

## CHAPTER VI

### HENRY PURCELL : THE GREATEST COMPOSER OF HIS TIME

IF the mother-country of the greatest composer living is necessarily the most musical nation, then England enjoyed this position for the third time a century after ceding it to Italy, for Henry Purcell was undoubtedly the greatest composer in the world during the fifteen years before his lamentably early death in 1696. With his last breath there passed away unfulfilled the greatest promise England has had since Elizabethan days of a national school of composition. The invention in Rome and Florence in 1600 of the two greatest forms in which music is cast, oratorio and opera, naturally give immense impetus to Italianism in music. Purcell himself, in the preface to "Diocletian," makes a courtly and, in its self-deprecating element, utterly needless bow to foreign composers. "English music," he says, "is now learning Italian, which is its best master, and studying a little of the French air to give it somewhat more of gayety and fashion . . . we

must be content to shake off our barbarity by degrees." Despite this, his musical and dramatic genius was vastly superior to that of any contemporary, except, perhaps, Alexandro Scarlatti. In the latter, the purely dramatic gift, he was much more highly endowed than his great successor in this country—Handel, whose operas predeceased their composer. Purcell's operas, on the other hand, have had the longest life of any, being still occasionally performed two-and-a-quarter centuries after they were written! Moreover, the audience present at a revival of "Dido and Æneas" a few years ago at the Royal Academy of Music were struck with the modernity of atmosphere and absence of any sense of anachronism in the music. *Excerpts* are still given of Alexandro Scarlatti's operas, but not, I believe, the complete works, or those of any other opera composer who died in the seventeenth century. The massive chorus, too, which is so essential a feature of all greater vocal works in the present day, though foreshadowed in early French operas, must be credited to Purcell more than to any other one composer. And what the world's greatest master of the chorus, Handel, owes to Purcell, only those who have carefully compared the works of the two men know.<sup>1</sup> Of great though perhaps

<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., E. V. Rendall's paper in "Musical Times," 1895, p. 293.

lesser service in the evolution of modern musical art was Purcell's development of orchestral accompaniment.

The reputation of Great Britain as a musical nation has suffered severely from the grotesque neglect of music by our historians. In the third chapter of his famous *History of England*, Macaulay deals at length not merely with the later seventeenth century, but in particular with its arts and sciences. Yet he never once alludes to Henry Purcell, who was the greatest composer England has ever produced, and the greatest composer in the world at the time!

## CHAPTER VII

ENGLISH EMINENCE IN VOCAL MUSIC : OUR FIRST  
MIRACLE PLAY AND PASSION ; EARLY SOLO SONGS ;  
THE ANTHEM ; SERVICE ; AND GLEE.

It may easily be that a country or age not distinguished as a whole may yet be pre-eminent in some particular branch of art, and Great Britain has never been without such a claim to distinction. Chief and most enduring among them has been her uniformly high position in regard to vocal, and especially choral, music. England appears to have been specially eminent in the cultivation of boys' voices. When Becket visited Paris in great state, in 1159—that is, at the height of the city's musical fame—he was preceded by 250 boys, who walked singing in English—"according to the custom of his country."<sup>1</sup> When Henry V. entered London after the battle of Agincourt boys with pleasing voices were placed in artificial turrets singing verses in his praise ; he commanded that the praise should be given not to him but to God, and this was duly carried out in the subsequent "Song of Agincourt."

<sup>1</sup> Unnamed author quoted by Davey, "History of English Music," p. 18.



The establishment of Chapels Royal had an incalculable influence on the advancement of vocal art, and that set up by Henry V.—if, indeed, it was not due to Henry IV. or even Richard II.—was one of the earliest. In later days the English Chapel Royal scandalised conservative musicians by its fondness for that “*musica ficta*”<sup>1</sup> which led the way to modern tonality. During the second expedition of Henry V. to France that monarch sent over for his “Chapel,” that is, ecclesiastical musicians, consisting of six “organists” (singers of the “organum,” a crude harmony), clerks, and singers, that he might celebrate Easter at Rouen with becoming splendour. In 1466 Leo von Rozmital, brother-in-law of the King of Bohemia, made a tour through Western Europe. He was entertained at a banquet by our Edward IV., and in an account of the ceremony Schassak, his secretary, wrote: “We heard in no country sweeter or more agreeable musicians than these; their chorus consists of about 60 voices.” A German member of the suite, Gabriel Tetzcl, recorded a very similar opinion: “After the ball came the king’s singers; I believe that there are no better singers in the world.” Early in the next century Sagudino, a Venetian ambas-

<sup>1</sup> That is, inflected notes, or sharps and flats in a natural key.

sador, was equally impressed; speaking in 1515 of Henry Eighth's Chapel Royal he said: "Their voices are really divine rather than human . . . . and as for the deep basses, I do not believe they are equalled in the world." And from that day to this the standard of male voice church choirs, with the exception of the Sistine Choir, has been higher in England than in any other country. Milan, for instance, in the present day, will not compare with our leading cathedrals, or, indeed, many parish churches.

The earliest known British Miracle Play was performed at Dunstable in 1110, and not impossibly it included, as did later ones, a vocal element.<sup>1</sup> The first "Passions" known are English; they are those in Latin, of the year 967, discovered by Professor Skeat at Oxford. None can be traced on the Continent for long after 1490, which is approximately the date of an imperfect S. Matthew Passion with music by Richard Davy.<sup>2</sup> The fame of English vocal music in Elizabeth's day is one of the best known facts of British musical history. The greatest of all madrigal writers was, perhaps, the Italian,

<sup>1</sup> Miracle Plays, however, were written abroad between 920—968 by Hroswitha, a Saxon nun.

<sup>2</sup> Given in the "Eton College MS."; see H. Davey, "History of English Music," p. 90.

Constanza Festa, whose "Down in a flow'ry vale," written about 1530, is probably the oldest piece of secular polyphonic music still frequently sung. But of the seven greatest madrigalists, as given by Bonavia Hunt, six were English.

Music for several simultaneous voices was for centuries the only form in which vocal art-music, as distinct from folk-song, was written. Vocal solos, such as are now found in operas, oratorios, and art-songs, were unknown. The credit of originating them was for long attributed to Caccini, whose *Nuove Musiche*, containing accompanied recitatives, appeared in 1602; and Francesco Cavalli, in whose *Giasone* (1649) recitative first develops into a distinct air. But the honour more properly belongs to Adrian Willaert who in 1540 issued arrangements (of Verdelot) for solo voice; and secondly to English composers; for in 1587 William Byrd published an arrangement for several voices of a set of songs with instrumental accompaniment which had been originally, and therefore before 1587, composed as solo-songs. And in 1601 two collections of solo-songs were published in this country: Jones' "Second Book of Ayres" claims to be the first of its kind, but a collection issued by Campion and Rosseter, and dated May 15th, 1601, can only

have been later by a few months, and "is more typical of the new school."<sup>1</sup> These are believed to be the earliest printed solo songs in existence.

There are three vocal forms which indisputably owe their origin to English composers—the anthem, Anglican Church "service"<sup>2</sup> and glee;<sup>3</sup> and, if it is not too small a thing to mention, the Anglican chant may be added. The hymn-tune, too, as distinct from the severer German chorale, may almost be claimed as a British invention, on so vast a scale and in such variety have we developed it, while other nations have done little or nothing. Naturally, in these peculiarly national forms British composers have excelled. Foreign composers have scarcely deigned even to notice their existence; had they done so, had even the giants of the "German genius period" competed with British musicians on their own ground, it is doubtful whether they would have produced gems of greater lustre than Battishill's "Call to Remembrance," Attwood's "Come, Holy Ghost" (which is not unworthy of comparison with the "Ave Verum" of Mozart, a composer whom Samuel Wesley perhaps even more often

<sup>1</sup> Davey, p. 181.

<sup>2</sup> Our claim in this respect is considerably modified by the existence of many Magnificats by foreign composers.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Brewer's *Turn Ananyllis*, composed 1602, is reputed the first glee

approaches); or, in the field of secular music, Stevens' "Sigh no more, ladies," or Spofforth's "Hail, smiling Morn," to name but a few out of our treasury of vocal miniatures.

Naturally, as a nation of sailors, we have produced the finest sea-songs, and the Laureate of the Waves, the poet-composer Charles Dibdin, "the Tyrtæus of the British Navy" as he has been called, was launched on life from one of Britain's seaports. One of our nautical ballads, Arne's "Rule, Britannia," has been declared the finest patriotic song in the world.<sup>1</sup> Wagner declared that the first eight notes were a complete musical portrait of the British people. Add to this the paradoxical fact that "a nation without music," as we have been termed by two German professors, has given to the world its most international national anthem! Our tune to "God save the King" has been adopted—though, of course, with different words—by Denmark, Russia (up till 1833) and Germany. Not unnaturally the latter country, after vainly endeavouring to discover a Teutonic origin for the air, is now giving it up!

<sup>1</sup> Probably on this account a German author, Schoelcher, claims the tune for Handel, who quotes two bars in his *Occasional Oratorio*, produced in 1745. But the complete tune first appeared in Arne's masque *Alfred*, performed August 1st, 1740; in the unsuccessful version of *Alfred* by Mallet produced in 1751, to which Schoelcher refers as being subsequent to Handel's oratorio, the tune merely reappeared as the most popular item of the original edition.

Beethoven wrote his Variations on this melody "to show the English what a treasure they have in it."

Nor has our success been wholly confined to these shorter forms. The operas of Purcell have already been mentioned. The period from his death till, in the early nineteenth century, the operas of Balfe and Wallace began to spread over Europe, is generally regarded as the blackest in Britain's musical history. Yet our record even during this dark time will better bear comparison with that of other nations than our too shame-faced historians generally recognise. The famous *Beggar's Opera*, produced in 1727, is still occasionally performed.<sup>1</sup> Its success forms one of the most romantic chapters in the history of music; and while often described as artistically worthless, it did much to promote naturalness and local colour in opera proper. Arne's *Artaxerxes* kept the stage for 67 years. Dibdin's *Waterman* and *The Quaker*, and Storace's *No Song, No Supper*, were occasionally heard a hundred years after their prelude notes first broke the silence. Many other English operas enjoyed a great though less popularity, and lived to a good old age. An acute critic, Sir W. H. Hadow, while admitting that the harvest "is a meagre one," points out

<sup>1</sup> The first occasion was in 1872 or 1873; a correspondent who was present is not sure which of these two dates is the correct one.

that English opera "always shows some character, some sweetness of phrase." He singles out a number of operas by Dibdin, Storace, Attwood, and particularly Arnold's *Castle of Andalusia* and Shield's *Rosina*. The latter he calls "a work of genius," and protests that no other nation in Europe would so lightly have cast it ("the best of the grain") away to the common dust heap of oblivion.

Let it be remembered that, as already pointed out, Handel's operas predeceased their author; that only three Italian operas of the eighteenth century have survived, namely, Pergolesi's *La serva padrona* (1733), Paisiello's opera of the same name (1769), and Cimarosa's *La Matrimonio Segreto* (1792); that British composers won their success on the most cosmopolitan stage in the world, and the work of the sons of our soil will be seen in a truer perspective. So, too, will the much maligned judgment of British audiences; for had they been unwilling to hear the music of their fellow-countrymen, no opera by a native composer could have run for 75 nights, as Linley's *Duenna* did, while Handel's best one, *Rinaldo*, ran only for 15; nor would others have held the stage for fifty or a hundred years.

The same conclusion will be reached if we consider the other of the two greatest and twin-



born moulds in which music is cast—*oratorio*, which is also chiefly a vocal form. As with opera, every composer capable of producing music in bulk has composed one or more examples; and a faint conception of the number of such works is probably possessed only by book-worms whose pabulum is musical encyclopædias. Of a list of 52 notable examples given, apart from any national discrimination, in the “*Encyclopædic Dictionary of Music*,” examination shows 20 to be German, 16 English, 3 Austro-Hungarian, and 3 French.

Gluck, who has been called “the creator of dramatic music,” confessed to Dr. Burney that “he owed to England the study of nature in his dramatic compositions and . . . finding that plainness and simplicity had the greatest effect upon them he has ever since that time (his visit to England in 1745) endeavoured to write for the voice, more in the natural tones of human affection and passions, than to flatter the lovers of deep science of difficult execution”; “and it may be remarked,” adds Dr. Burney, “that most of his airs in *Orfeo* are as plain and simple as English ballads.”<sup>1</sup> Haydn, again, and Berlioz, to come nearer to our own day, were much struck with the excellence of English singing, especially the boys’

<sup>1</sup> Burney, “*Present State of Music in Germany*,” I. 264.



and girls' voices at the Charity Children's Festival in St. Paul's Cathedral. In the present day the Leeds and Sheffield Festival Choruses are the finest choirs in the world.

The system of singing from notes by relative pitch, known in Great Britain as the Movable Doh, or Tonic Sol-fa, system, and in France as the Galin-Cheve method, though generally supposed to be new, is in reality nothing of the sort. Its principle was adopted by the Greeks in both vocal and instrumental music. Guido of Arezzo, a famous Italian monk of the eleventh century, invented new note-names—*ut, re, mi, fa, sol, la*, applying them not to notes of fixed pitch, but like the Greeks had done their *names* (as distinct from letter-signs), to notes of relative pitch, that is, to degrees of the scale. They will be found so applied in an edition of the Psalter by Marot and Beza, printed in 1567, of course on the contemporary system of "Mutation," or constantly changing key without any "bridge-tone." A copy, believed to be unique, is in the Library of Innerpefferay, Perthshire. The copy of the 1567 edition in the British Museum does not contain sol-fa marks. In 1560 Pierre Davantes, at Lyons, printed a copy of the Marot and Beza Psalter with a numeral notation, and claimed that **it was the first of its kind.** A copy of this rare

PRAYMR VIII.

## ORATION.

O Dieu seul Seigneur des cœurs, & qui lûs que nous ne sommes  
perfeztor de nous aduerſaires, ſi non pource que nous n'aons  
eſpèr en que'en toy ſeul, eſten ton bras pour repouſſer ceux qui  
nous pourroyent a tort, & rafſemble ton Eglise diſperſee par la ty-  
rannie des Prelats, & nous mainten toutours en ta ſainte pro-  
tection par ton fils Ieſus Chriſt noſtre Sauueur. Amen.

PSÈ A V M E V I I I . C L . M A .

ARGVM.

A Dieu grande ad  
 miracion. David ce  
 lebre et la uirtu  
 luyse paffant. Au  
 Createur de toutes  
 choses, la grande  
 bone dont il a da  
 gné user enuers l'  
 homme, l'ayà fait  
 tel qu'il est  
 Domine, Domi  
 nus noster.

1 Au souverain  
châssé sur Gethsé,  
Esclave de David.

O Eternel, no-  
stre Seigneur,  
que ton nom est  
sacré par tou-  
te la terre, qui as  
mis ta majesté sus  
les cieux.

3 De la bouche  
des enfans & allu-  
sés ru as fondé la  
spree a cause de  
tes aduerfaires , z-  
fin le faire cesser  
l'ennemi & l'en-  
nux

4. Quand te regardes-tu ceux qui ont l'ouïe de tes

O

Notre Dieu & Seigneur

amable, Combien ton Nom est

grand & admirable Par tout ce

valter restre spa ci eux, Qui ra

puissance éleue sur les cieux.

3 En tout se void ta grand' vertu parfaite  
Jusqu'à la bouche aux enfans qu'o allaite:  
Et rends par là confus & abbatu  
Tout ennemi qui nie ta vertu.

Mais quand ie voy & cõtèple en courage  
Tes creux q sõt de tes doigts haut ourage  
Etoilles

of a relative *letter* notation. So many people are under the impression that sol-fa is a new system that it may be well to give a specimen page of this extremely interesting old psalter, though it is British only by naturalization.

"CL.MA." are the initials of Clement Marot (other psalms have TH.BE.—Theodore Beza). The rhythm is quadruple, though an odd triple measure occurs at the end of the fourth stave. There are no bar-lines. The short perpendicular stroke following e.g. the fourth note of the second stave, is equivalent to a double bar and indicates the end of a line of the poetry. The mark  $\surd$  at the end of each stave is a direct, foreshowing the position of the first note on the next stave. The "Mutation" is as follows :

*Stave 1.* The first note is Re in the hexachord of C, the fourth Re in that of G.

*Stave 3.* Second note La in C ; third note Fa in F.

*Stave 4.* First note Re in C ; second note Re in G ; the sixth and seventh notes are respectively Fa and Mi in F ; the eighth Re in G. The " V " before the note indicates " Ut."

*Stave 5.* The fourth note is La in hexachord of C.

As mutation had usually to be applied *without being written* the reader will readily understand why it became known as *crux et tormentum puerorum* !

As these pages go to press Dr. Grattan Flood draws my attention to a book published in 1550 showing how to sing the psalms by sol-fa aban-

doing the Guidonian method ; and to another by Father William Bathe of Dublin published in 1584, the first *printed* book in English on Musical Theory, and containing a "short cut" method of learning to sing. *Ut* was afterwards changed to "*Do*," except in France, and a seventh note, *Si*, was added. Unfortunately, during the rapid advance in instrumental music, these sol-fa names were misapplied to notes of fixed pitch, and so remain in France and Italy to this day, and the logical and admirable system of the Movable Doh fell into disuse. The most complete and popular form in which it has been revived—one likely to become world-wide—is due, with the exception of the time-names, which are French, to two English musicians—Miss Glover, daughter of a Norwich clergyman, and the Rev. John Curwen, a Congregational minister. At first scoffed at in high places, this system is now included in the curricula of all the leading colleges, and for twenty years before the war was spreading in Germany, where it was recommended by the S. Cecilian Society.

The third printed example of a *relative* notation, which is the second example of a numeral notation, also saw the light and was possibly invented in Great Britain. It occurs in a copy of a "*Siren Coelestis*" by a German com-

poser, G. Victorinus, and was published in London in 1638. Possibly the numerals occur in the first German edition published at Munich in 1616: during the war this cannot be ascertained; but they do not occur in the second German edition of 1622, and therefore probably appeared for the first time in the English edition: indeed, a preface by the English editor, William Braythwayt, leaves little doubt that they were invented for it by Victorinus. The numeral system never took root in this country, though it did in France at a later period.

.Cant. vel Ten.

XX.

*Adriani Bianchieri.*

715.43 21. 1711345 5645223432176

Sti sunt triumphatores qui viventes in carne,

312334212456 54432 32112 71 5621221

ij

isti sunt triumphatores qui viventes in carne plantaverunt, plan-

233 3444 2 22122234445533321554 565

taverunt ecclesiam sanguine suo,

ij

calicem Do-

4332211712176 6551761226564534342332

mini calicē Do-

mini bibe-

runt, &

amici De-

i facti sunt

54534232312.212254534232312.21 5453

& amici De- i facti sunt, & amici De- i facti sunt, &

42 32312171

mici De- i facti sunt.

EARLY EXAMPLE OF NUMERAL NOTATION;

LONDON, 1638

Before leaving the subject of vocal music one of our negative virtues should not be allowed to escape attention : in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries English Church-music was free from the insensate formalism and verbal secularity, even obscenity, characteristic of Continental composers. The English Church was, consequently, much more liberal in its treatment of music than either the Genevan Fathers or the Council of Trent. And similarly in regard to secular music : in the eighteenth century English opera was comparatively immune from the incredible puerilities—"the soprano men, howling women, and buffonery," to quote Rousseau—which sullied it abroad.

Alas ! justice compels one to confess that for the time being, and in regard to a section of the nation, the tables have been turned. During the last half-century or more a shallow and utterly frivolous note has found its way into our popular music ; and this not only in the music-halls, where as a matter of fact the artistic standard is much higher than it was, but in the last place where superficiality should be found—the religious revival platform. Many thousands of our people listen to music—save the mark !—of which it is a compliment to say that in its happiest moments it occasionally rises to the level of twaddle, and

this with an apparent contentment, and to quantities which could probably be equalled by no other nation. But happily a broad view of musical history shows that just as the genius-period of a nation is a passing phase, so may its decline be, and the whole course of our musical record points to this aberration as being merely temporary.

## CHAPTER VIII

### EDUCATIONAL CONDITIONS.      LATER INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC.

WITH one serious exception, to be named shortly, educational facilities in Great Britain have generally stood high. For during those periods when we have fallen sadly below our own high-water mark, eminent pedagogues of other lands have frequently found their most lucrative sphere of work within our shores.

Prominent among these facilities is the system of notation in use. Among the earliest methods in the world was probably the ideographic-sign system of the Chinese, corresponding to the Letter system of the Greeks which Western nations adopted. The first system invented in Christian times was that of "neumes," already referred to. The reputed inventor of the system, according to Dr. Emil Naumann, was St. Ephraim, a monk who lived at the end of the fourth century, and who is said to have abandoned the use of Greek letters and substituted fourteen original characters. But the earliest writer to *mention*



neumes is our own Bishop Aldhelm, "the first Englishman [not Briton] to become famous as a musician." A writer who is either unaware of, or disallows, the claim of S. Ephraim (Mr. Henry Davey)<sup>1</sup> suggests that Aldhelm was himself the inventor of the system he is the first to mention. Another (Dr. Grattan Flood),<sup>2</sup> disregarding the fact that, as the Prentice Pillar at Rosslyn bears witness, a pupil may excel his master, seems to consider S. Aldhelm's having been an enthusiastic pupil of S. Mailduff, an Irish monk, as in itself a sufficient reason for awarding the honour to Hibernia. We need not labour the point here, for in either of these cases the invention was British.

To whom the world owes the incalculably valuable invention of a line to represent a musical sound is not known. But in the article on Irish Influence on Music by Dr. W. H. Grattan Flood, already referred to, the author claims that "the one-line stave of the Ogham alphabet suggested the one-line stave on which the neums were written, and thus originated the modern system of musical notation. Before the introduction of the one-line stave by the Irish monks, the position of the neums, or musical signs to express pitch,

<sup>1</sup> History of English Music, p. 501.

<sup>2</sup> History of Irish Music, p. 12.

could not be determined with any degree of exactness; and indeed the neums of the eighth century were merely aids to memory, for the Plain Chant melodies had to be learnt by heart. (Let me add that the neums had no relation to *pneuma*, as is frequently stated; the word or sign.) This Irish device of a one-line stave was adopted both for the musical setting of Plain Chant and secular songs. It was drawn across the parchment over the words of the song, and became the F clef, thus affording a basis for musical pitch from which was subsequently evolved the present stave of five lines."

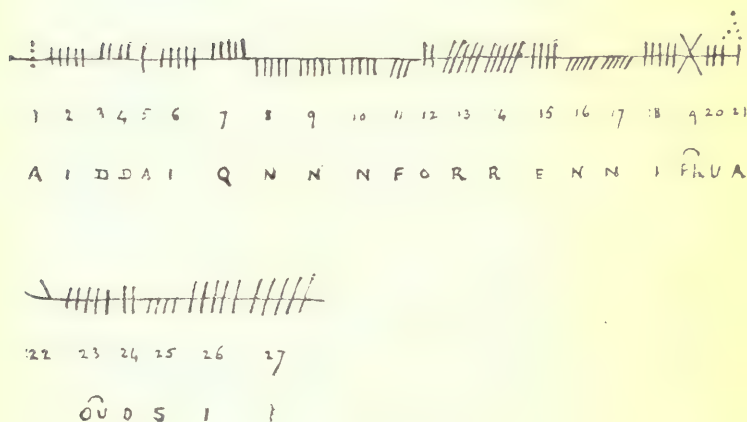
The Ogam or Ogham alphabet was a series of strokes carved some at one side, some at the other, and some across the edge of a stone, generally perpendicular. It is first found according to Dr. Flood "from the third century," other writers say, "during the later years of the Roman occupation" (end of fourth century), and "prior to the ninth century"—just the period when the first traces of a stave are found. After a careful examination of Dr. Flood's argument, both in his article and in the first chapter of his *History of Irish Music*, I am unable to agree with him that "the very word Ogham suggests at once a musical signification": the Secretary of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland informs me that

such a theory is "not admissible" and that the paper referred to by Dr. Grattan Flood, which appeared in the R.S.A.I. Journal for 1856-7, would "hardly have appeared nowadays or for many years back." And I must confess myself unconvinced that "the Brassay inscription," two illustrations of which lie before me, "furnishes an example of music scoring": it may be that "three of the mystic strokes are identical with three musical signs," but similar strokes, curves and dots occur in all pen and chisel work. Nor can I agree that the derivation of the musical staff from the Ogham tablature at all is by any means certain. But it is sufficiently probable to make an illustration of this quaint old Celtic writing extremely interesting. Oghams are found in Scotland, Wales and Cornwall, but are much more numerous in Ireland. At the time when they are believed to have been most in use the Irish monks were at the height of their activity as musical educators. Consequently they, more than any other Celtic people, are likely to have turned these cryptic characters to musical account. Nevertheless in one respect the Irish Oghams are inferior in suggestiveness to those in Shetland. For these latter instead of being cut across the natural edge of a perpendicular stone are cut across an artificially incised line on the



# DIAGRAM OF AN OGHAM INSCRIPTION THE LUNNASTING STONE.\*

## POSSIBLE ORIGIN OF LINEAR ELEMENT IN MUSICAL NOTATION



\* In the diagram there should have been colon points after No. 22

surface of the stone, and in at least some cases the stone is not erect but flat—both conditions much more likely to suggest a line drawn on parchment than the upright edge of a stone, or prepared strip of wood, on which latter Irish Oghams were sometimes written. Consequently out of many illustrations which the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland have most kindly placed at my disposal I have selected what is known as the Lunnasting Stone. This stone, a flat one, about a yard in length, was found five feet below the surface in the parish of Lunnasting, Mainland of Shetland. The inscription is “the hardest of all” to decipher, but is believed to mean “(the Body) of Duichat, of Manannland; the son of Fife; is lodged here.” The lettering, often combined with Oghams on Scottish stones, and the numerals, which are merely identification marks and of course are not to be found on the stone itself, do not concern us here.

Before quitting this subject a cautionary word must be uttered against the misconception that whatever is Scottish is ultimately and generically due to Ireland. From about the middle of the ninth century the name “Scots” has been given to a fusion of Celtic peoples a minority of whom had crossed over into Argyllshire from Ireland

apparently about the end of the fifth century, though the date is much disputed ; and a majority of whom were of the Pictish and British branches of the race whose ancestors had landed in Albin (Scotland) from their Asiatic cradle probably at the same time that the Scottish Celts landed in Ireland, and who are not known ever to have been in the latter country. Evidence of this may be seen in the wide divergence of character between the Irish and Scottish Celts in the present day.<sup>1</sup>

Turning from notation to more explicitly educational works we shall find that of the twenty most important treatises on music from Boethius in the sixth century to Rameau in the eighteenth, nine were certainly, and two others probably, by Englishmen. Burney declares the famous textbook by Walter Odington, written about 1300, sufficient to balance all other mediæval treatises ; and those by Robert de Handlo, 1326 ; Simon Tunsted, 1350 ; Lionel Power,<sup>2</sup> 1350 ; John Dunstable, 1400 ; and Thomas Morley, 1597, remained authoritative here and abroad for centuries. Nor was the study of music confined to Churchmen ; under Edward III. the

<sup>1</sup> For a most careful and detailed exposition of Celtic origins see *The Gaelic Kingdom in Scotland*, by Charles Stewart, chapter 1.

<sup>2</sup> The first treatise on music written in English.

art formed an integral part of the lay system of education ; students of the Inns of Court learnt both to sing and play instruments, and when, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, masques became popular, they took a great part in them ; and, as we learn from the prologue to Chaucer's " Canterbury Tales," music was cultivated more or less by persons of all conditions. In Scotland Sang Scules were established from the thirteenth century onwards ; that erected at Aberdeen, in 1370, acquired a European reputation. Our universities were the second—the Spanish being the first<sup>1</sup>—to grant degrees in music, the earliest being conferred in 1463. A century later inability to sing from notes was regarded as a sign of deficient education, and after another hundred years even servant girls were expected to possess this accomplishment. Mr. Chappell describes the universality of music during the Elizabethan and subsequent period very vividly : " Tinkers sang catches ; milkmaids sang ballads ; carters whistled ; each trade, and even the beggars, had their special songs : the base-viol hung in the drawing-room for the amusement of waiting visitors ; and the lute, cittern, and virginals, for the amusement of waiting customers, were the necessary furniture of the barber's shop. They

<sup>1</sup> A fact overlooked in most histories and dictionaries.



had music at dinner, music at supper, music at weddings, music at funerals, music at night, music at dawn, music at work, and music at play."

In instrumental music Great Britain has never regained the supremacy which the Irish, Scots and Welsh enjoyed in the period centring round the twelfth century; and England from the early sixteenth, up to the time of Purcell; and this weakness in orchestral music has been the chief cause of, and justification for, the large efflux of our students to foreign conservatoires. Nevertheless, in two respects she may claim to be ahead of other nations, even on the orchestral platform. Though the United Kingdom has produced none of the greatest composers for the King of Instruments—Bach, Mendelssohn, Merkel, Rheinberger, Widor—the standard of playing in this country is higher than in any other country in the world, a fact which lies at the back of the familiar Continental jibe that we are a "nation of organists." The late Mr. W. T. Best was the greatest organ virtuoso the world has seen; Sir Walter Parratt, organist of St. George's, Windsor, is the greatest classical organist living, and Mr. Lemare probably the greatest concert organist. Secondly, it was a British composer, the Irishman, John Field, who invented the

instrumental form which Chopin brought to such perfection—the nocturne. Field was a pianist of European fame, and his compositions are still in use on the Continent. It is worth mentioning, too, that though the piano was an Italian invention, the date of which was about 1710, it lay moribund for fifty years till perfected in England by the Scotsman, John Broadwood, his apprentice Robert Stodart, and the Dutchman, Americus Backers; and for long London was the centre of the piano trade, and exported instruments to the Continent. The first known use of the piano in public for accompaniment was on May 16th, 1767, at Covent Garden, the accompanist being Dibdin; its first use as a solo instrument was at the Thatched House, London, on June 2nd, 1768, the performer being J. C. Bach (known as “The English Bach,” from his long residence in London), and its first use in a theatre orchestra was at Drury Lane, in 1771, the player being Mr. Burney, nephew of the historian. Muzio Clementi, the “Father of pianoforte playing,” spent most of his days and did his life-work in London; as did his able lieutenant, J. B. Cramer.

Turning to the Queen of Instruments, and retracing our steps somewhat, England has not produced the greatest violinist of any period. But one such, Thomas Baltzar, like

so many other sons of Jubal, found his most appreciative home here; and it was in an Englishman, Davis Mell, that he met his keenest rival. In John Banister, chief violinist to Charles II., and Matthew Dubourg, Mell had worthy successors.

No structural alteration has taken place in the violin for 300 years, and no material development in the principles of playing it since Corelli, who died in 1713. The outstanding feature of the eighteenth century was a development of executive virtuosity which frequently overbalanced into charlatanry. England was no exception to the general rule, and Paganini was foreshadowed in John Clegg, J. A. Fisher, G. A. P. Bridgetower, and others. The latter was the violinist with whom Beethoven first played the "Kreutzer Sonata" in public.

It should not escape notice, too, that if instrumental composition after Purcell's day achieved no great heights, it never descended to the utter frivolity characteristic of much Continental music. Most of it was marked by "dignified solidness and sober geniality." Dr. Blow's "Solo for two Violins" has "a real look of Bach,"<sup>1</sup> and the Oxford History of Music makes a similar comparison in regard to some harpsichord music by

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Walker, "History of Music in England."

Dr. Nares. Dr. Boyce's sonatas for string instruments are as good as similar works by any composer of the period, and his Solemn March in E-flat need not fear comparison with that in the "Alceste" of his great contemporary, Gluck.

## CHAPTER IX

LIGHT ON BRITAIN'S DARK AGE. THE TOMBS OF  
THE PROPHETS. THE WORLD'S GREATEST WOMAN  
COMPOSER.

THE eighteenth century and early nineteenth have often been spoken of as Great Britain's Dark Age in regard to music ; but it was not quite so dark a time as "lovers of every nation but their own" have been disposed to make out. As shown in the chapters on vocal and instrumental music, especially in regard to the output of operas, and the perfecting and introduction of the piano, it was a period of great activity, and high executive attainment. Most of our great national and nautical songs were inspired by the stirring political events of this epoch, and two books which, whatever their defects, have acquired a foremost place among the musical world's literary classics, namely the voluminous *Histories of Music* respectively by Dr. Burney and Sir John Hawkins, were both published in 1776.

If Britain during this period was mother to none of the world's greatest composers, she may

at least claim that many of their masterpieces were composed for her, and met with their highest appreciation, and sometimes their best performance, in this country. Handel lived for nearly fifty years and did practically his whole life-work among us. Bach was not nearly so well understood in his own day, and it was an Englishman, Samuel Wesley—nephew of the Apostle of Methodism—who may not unreasonably be described as the first Bach enthusiast: he made it his mission to herald the genius of the immortal contrapuntist and propagate his works, especially the fugues. Not till thirty years later, and eighty years after Bach's death, did a similar personal missionary, in the person of Mendelssohn, appear in the composer's own country; and though the first complete edition of the famous 48 fugues for clavier appeared in Germany, it was inspired by a similar publication projected and begun two or three years earlier in England. Thus the first of Bach's fugues to be printed, though edited by a German, August F. K. Kollman, organist of the German Chapel, St. James's, found its way into type in London.

Handel's operas were much more appreciated in England than on the mainland of Europe. It was for us, too, that the world's greatest oratorios were composed—all Handel's (except his now

unknown *Passion Oratorio*), Haydn's *Creation*, and Mendelssohn's *Elijah*. The *Messiah* was introduced to its composer's native country not by a German, but an Englishman—Michael Arne. Of all music's prophets Haydn was, perhaps, the most honoured in his own country and lifetime. But the tumultuous applause which greeted him in Vienna was only the echo of that in London. Not till his return from England did "Papa Haydn's" own countrymen realise fully how great a man had been born in their midst. It was an Englishman, again, who first appreciated the genius of Beethoven—leastways, who got up a fund to provide for his musical education; and when Mayseder asked the master whether we were not unmusical, Beethoven replied that "The English were the only people who appreciated himself."

Again, if since Purcell we produced none of the greater prophets, neither did we stone them. English composers have never occupied the servile position in some grandee's palace which was the normal lot of those abroad, and which so embittered Haydn's earlier years. No English Bach has had to beg repeatedly for a nod from royalty that he might equal inferior rivals and avert starvation. No English Mozart has been killed with the tyranny of a prince-bishop, the vitriolic

intrigues of jealous rivals, and poverty (he received only tenpence for songs which are among the world's art-treasures), and then been buried in a pauper's grave! We laid Baltzar, the German fiddler, Purcell, Blow, Croft, Handel, Arnold and Shield to rest in Westminster Abbey; Boyce and Battishill in St. Paul's Cathedral.

The gloom of this period was not a "darkness which could be felt," for the Gresham Professor, R. J. S. Stevens, of glee fame, writing in 1797, declared that music in England was then "thought to be in greater perfection than among the Italians themselves."

Beginning, so far as Britain is concerned, during this Dark Age—the phenomenon appeared much earlier in France—and increasing by leaps and bounds since, musicianship has been characterised by a feature which, in view of the course which human evolution is now taking, may have a great bearing on the future of the art. Yet hitherto it has, I think, wholly escaped notice. I refer to the large number of women composers. Some eighteen British women have composed works of considerable calibre—trios, concertos, symphonies, cantatas, oratorios, operas, or songs of merit, while the record for Germany appears to be seventeen; for France fifteen; for Italy nine; and Austria six. Better still, in quality Britain leads even



more distinctly ; for Dr. Ethel Smyth is, undoubtedly, the greatest woman composer the world has yet produced, and one of the greatest composers of the day. Her *The Wreckers* contains many features which “are among the most remarkable things in modern opera, and it is difficult to point to a work of any nationality since Wagner that has a more direct appeal to the emotions, or that is more skilfully planned and carried out.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> J. A. Fuller-Maitland.

## CHAPTER X

### THE OLDEST NATIONAL SCHOOL OF MUSIC.

#### THE PRESENT AND FUTURE.

JUDGED by the longevity of its institutions, music has shown a greater vitality in Great Britain than in any other country. The oldest existing musical society is English, for the Charter granted to "The Musicians' Company" of London by James I., in 1604, merely renewed privileges previously granted to his "beloved minstrels" by Edward IV. in 1469. And this latter charter, preserved by Raymen in his *Feodera*, though the oldest on record, was evidently not the first of its kind, for it refers to similar institutions in times past. Among these we may safely include the company or brotherhood called "Le Pui," formed by some merchants in London at the end of the thirteenth century for the encouragement of musical and poetical composition, of which Mrs. Edmond Wodehouse<sup>1</sup> tells us there is a record. Preceding these, as we have seen, were

<sup>1</sup> See her admirable article "Song" in Grove's "Dictionary of Music and Musicians," 1911 edition, page 592.

the companies of Harpers, Gleemen, Minstrels, Scalds and Bards. The Troubadours of Provence; the Minnesinger—confined to the nobility—and the Meister-singer, or middle-class guilds, of Germany, were of as old an origin as similar institutions in this country; but, unlike the Musicians' Company, they do not still exist. The society next in age would appear to be that of S. Cecilia, in Rome, founded by Palestrina, who died in 1594. The article on musical societies in one of the best known German Dictionaries of Music—Dr. Riemann's—records nothing, except English societies, earlier than 1859.

Up to the mid-sixteenth century every composer of note whose name and work have come down to us—as pointed out in Chapter III, probably much music was lost through the lay composer's inability to write—was an ecclesiastic. Adam de la Hale, born 1230, was no exception, for after tiring of the lady with whom he had fallen so hopelessly in love, he obtained a separation, and appears to have carried out his original intention of becoming a monk. And England may claim not only the first secular composition in more than two parts, "Sumer is icumen in," an honour which would otherwise rest with De la Hale's chansons, but the first lay organist and

composer of Church music, the famous Thomas Tallis, whose name is so well known in connection with the Responses of the Anglican Church; and in John Dowland, already mentioned, she may claim the first secular composer of note—the first who had no official connection with the Church. It was, therefore, merely the natural outcome of long-existent conditions that Oxford in 1670 was the home of the first public concerts, that is, concerts to which the general public were admitted by payment; the second were the musical meetings which took place daily at the house of John Banister in Whitefriars, Fleet Street, London, in 1672. France followed in 1725, Germany in 1743, and Austria exactly a century after England, in 1772.

Greater, however, than priority in any one branch of the art is the fact that the Island Kingdom can boast a longer continuous musical history than any other country in the Western world. The Russian school penetrates time to a depth of only seventy years; the French and German schools to about three hundred and fifty years; the Italian, barely four centuries; Great Britain, reckoning only, as is usual, from Dunstable, five hundred years. But this estimate is an instance of the under-statement of their own case characteristic of English musical writers.

Grotesquely inadequate as is Dr. Emil Naumann's treatment of British music, he does us the justice of dating the English school from "somewhat earlier than 1360." In the present writer's opinion it should be dated from "Sumer is icumen in," 1226—seven hundred years!

It is impossible thus to review Great Britain's place among the nations which have occupied the throne of music in the past without wondering on whom the crown is likely to descend in the future. Writing thirty-five years ago, Dr. Naumann spoke of the "German genius period" as a thing of the past; and historians outside the Fatherland have remarked on the waning of Teutonic ascendance for many years now. Who will take Germany's place?

The greatest composers born during the last century have come from no one nation. Excluding those now living, the most prominent among them are Glinka, Cesar Cui, Moussorgsky, Tschai-kowsky and Arensky—Russians; Balfe, Wallace, Sterndale-Bennett (the only Briton to be offered the conductorship of the Gewandhaus Concerts), Sullivan and Parry—Britons, works by all of whom, it may be added, have received the much coveted but withal somewhat over-prized hall-mark of recognition abroad; Coleridge-Taylor, the Anglo-African; Mendelssohn, Franz, Schumann,

Wagner, Brahms, Raff—Germans ; Dvorak, the Bohemian ; Bellini and Verdi—Italians ; Gade, the Dane ; Cesar Franck, the Belgian ; Berlioz, David, Saint-Saens, Delibes, Gounod, Offenbach, Bizet, among many distinguished French composers. In regard to future development, however, the record of the nations varies much more in promise than a cursory glance at this list would suggest. For while the work of the Russian school may be equalled by some of its neighbours, it has been attained in a fifth of the time, and represents a rapidity of growth unequalled in the chronicles of the art. And Mr. Arthur Pougin, in his “Short History of Russian Music,” is probably building no mere castle in the air when he avows a hope that “some day Russia may take its place at the head of the musical nations of Europe.”

But of living composers our own Mackenzie, Stanford, Cowen, Elgar, Ethel Smyth, Edward German, Holbrooke, Scott, Dale, York-Bowen, Vaughan-Williams, William Wallace ; the Australian, Percy Grainger, and many others, form a worthy counterpart to a similar list which may be drawn from any other country. Of the two greatest composers living, one, Sir Edward Elgar, is an Englishman, the other being Richard Strauss. And whether it be in the near or

distant future, it is not only possible but probable that the country whose missionary monks were among the chief musical educators of Europe from the seventh century onwards, which “invented the art of composition,” laid the foundation of the instrumental school, and has always been famous for its choral singing, will once again—perhaps in the course of the ages, many times—lead the world in the Divine Art.

# APPENDIX

211

## Chronological Table and Index of Typical Events.

(Items not followed by a page number are additional to those given in the body of the book. They are included in the Alphabetical Index.)

### STONE AGE.

A hollowed stone whistle (perhaps naturally formed), found near Reading, is probably of this period, and one of the oldest musical instruments in the world.

YEAR PAGE

— 12

### BRONZE AGE.

A hollow bone with one hole bored in it, now in the Dorset County Museum, is probably a Celtic whistle of, or previous to, this period.

— 12

Horns of brass found in Scotland and elsewhere date from the Bronze Age.

— 12

### BEFORE CHRIST.

B.C.

Plennyd, bard to Brutus, mythological founder of Britain, the first known Briton famous as a musician.

1149 13

Gabbet, first British King to be "the most able musician of his time" (*vide* Wace's metrical chronicle), subsequent to

1149 81

Date said "by some" to be that of Welsh tune *Nos Galen*.

1100  
to 100 13

Caius, the historian, believed that Druids originated in Britain.

1013 13

Bardic tradition says the lute was taken into Ireland by Heber and Heremon, first princes of Milesian race in Ireland.

1000 —

Heccatæus, quoted by Diodorus, describes the Celts as singing songs in praise of Apollo.

500 —

Many Celtic folk-songs must have existed long before the introduction of Christianity into Britain. *Dr. Ritter.*

say 500 —



	YEAR	PAGE
Pythias, a Greek navigator, says the British always carried a horn about with them.	384—	
The Crwyth is mentioned by an Irish poet said to have flourished before Christ.	322	81
	say 300	41
ANNO DOMINI.		
	A.D.	
SECOND CENTURY.		
The Gallican Liturgy, believed to have greatly influenced British usage, may with probability be ascribed to the second century.	—	104
According to Caius the historian, Druids ceased.	179	—
THIRD CENTURY.		
Nine different instruments are said to have been in use in Ireland this century.	—	—
S. Helena, daughter of Coel, King of the Roman Districts (the probable original of "Old King Cole"), and mother of the Emperor Constantine: first British princess famed for her skill in music.	250— 330	82
FOURTH CENTURY.		
The three British bishops who attended the Council at Arles probably brought back with them the Gallican chant (believed to be a species of monotone with inflections at the end of the sentence).	314	104
FIFTH CENTURY.		
The harp is mentioned in a poem of this century cited by Pennant in 1778.	—	—
The bag-pipe is mentioned in the Brehon Laws of this century (Rolls Series).	—	—
Organs in England.	—	114
Germanus and Lupus, French bishops of Sodor and Man, probably introduced Gallican chant to the island	cir 430	104
SIXTH CENTURY.		
Saxon "Beowulf" poem, probably written before		

# CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

213

	YEAR	PAGE
invasion of England, describes Anglo-Saxons as musical, and mentions several instruments. <i>cir</i>	520	15
Welsh harp music, including the Prelude to the Salt, given in a XVII Century MS., is said to have been played at the Court of King Arthur, usually assigned to this century. —	—	22
S. Columba uses a bell called "God's Vengeance" for taking oaths on. <i>after</i>	563	117
SEVENTH CENTURY.		
Venantius Fortunatus, Bishop of Poitiers, writes the famous lines: "Romanusque lyra plaudat tibi, Barbarus harpa, Græcus achilliaca, <i>chrotta</i> Brittanna canat." (The chrotta or crwyth was not at this time played with a bow). <i>cir</i>	600	42
Synod of Whitby accepts Roman observances: Celtic church music little heard of thereafter.	664	105
Theodore of Tarsus and Adrian of Naples came to England to teach Ambrosian plainsong.	668	105
Aldhelm, the first Englishman (not Briton) famous as a musician, says he wrote musical signs over the words: inventor of neumes? made Abbot of Malmesbury. <i>cir</i>	673	70
Ven. Bede writes theoretical and practical treatises on music which imply the existence of harmony.	675	146
Benedict Biscop sends to Rome for instructors in singing for York Minster.	678	106
Anglo-Saxon youths much given to music; it is socially derogatory to be without a knowledge of the art. <i>Bede.</i>	680	—
Pope Agatho sends John, Precentor of S. Peter's, Rome, to teach church music to the monks of Wearmouth; he establishes many music-schools in Northumbria.	680	106
Benedict, Abbot of Wearmouth, brings (hand?) bells from Italy.	680	—
EIGHTH CENTURY.		
An Eighth Century MS., burnt in 1768, represented the cythara Anglica, or English harp.	—	—

	YEAR	PAGE
The Canterbury Psalter and other MSS. of this period depict psalteries and horns.	—	—
The practice of elongating musical sentences in the liturgy, resulting in jubila and "tropes," was begun [re-introduced ?] this century.	—	123
A school of church music established at Canterbury. <i>cir</i>	700	107
Alcuin, of York, chief assistant to Charlemagne in spreading Plainsong over France and Germany.	735—	
Battle of Rhuddlan, originating Welsh tune Morva Rhuddlan.	804	139
The Ogham alphabet, which existed prior to the Ninth Century, possibly suggested the linear element in musical notation : most likely to Irish monks.	795	40
	—	190
NINTH CENTURY.		
The rebec, or rebeck (many variants) a two- (afterwards three) stringed instrument, precursor of viol, introduced into England this or succeeding century.	—	—
Paul the Deacon comes to England to teach church song (evidently "Paulus Diaconus," who wrote the hymn from which Guido of Arezzo took the sol-fa syllables). <i>cir</i>	800	106
Assumed date of Irish harp represented in Bunting's "Ancient Music of Ireland."	830	—
Earliest extant secular verses in a British dialect.	840	36
Duns Scotus Erigena writes a tract on descant or organum.	860	146
Alfred the Great said to have founded a Professorship of Music at Oxford. Secular music becomes a part of polite and not merely bardic education.	871	140
TENTH CENTURY.		
Bells were rung [the first in Britain ?] on death of Æthelwald.	905	117
King Howel Dha fixes the privileges of the Welsh bards.	940	20
S. Dunstan, Archbishop of Canterbury, builds organs ; composes church music ; establishes a bell-foundry [the first in Britain ?] ; is skilled in secular minstrelsy	960	115, 140

# CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

215

Latin liturgical plays on birth, life, death, and passion of Christ, given in churches at Christmas and Easter, etc., discovered by Professor Skeat, probably date from

YEAR PAGE

An immense organ, 400 pipes, erected at Winchester.

967 112

*cir* 980 143

Carrying out his predecessor's scheme, Abbot Egelric founds a peal of bells for Croyland Abbey.

984 —

## ELEVENTH CENTURY.

The famous Winchester Troper is of this period. The curfew bell was known prior to the Norman Conquest. Irish tunes are given in a MS. of this century discovered by Dr. Fleischer. The three-stringed crwyth is depicted in an Eleventh Century MS.

— 124-  
150

The Cotton MS. names the Nabulum; Psalterium; Tympanum (bagpipe?); Cythara; Tintinabulum; Sabuca; Pennola; Bumbulum; and Corus (bagpipe?).

— 142

Wolstan, a Saxon monk of Winchester, wrote *De Tonorum Harmoniæ* (now lost).

— —

St. Paul's Cathedral, London, choir school founded.

1042 108

John Cotton, probably an Englishman, writes Treatises of great importance.

*cir* 1050 142

Normans introduce the word "minstrel."

1066 52

Thomas, first Norman Archbishop of York, writes hymns to minstrels' tunes

1070 03

Osbern of Dover, Precentor of Canterbury Cathedral, "without doubt the greatest of all musicians" (*vide* William of Malmesbury), writes *De Re Musica*.

*cir* 1074 ~

Osmund, Bishop of Salisbury, establishes the "Sarum Use."

1077 —

It becomes of more consequence that a young knight should know how to compose, sing and play, than versify, read or write. *Ritter*.

*cir* 1080 82

Congress of Welsh bards convened by Gruffydd ab Cynan.

*cir* 1090 20

## TWELFTH CENTURY.

S. Bartholomew's Priory, London, founded by Rahere, the King's minstrel.

1102 54

	YEAR	PAGE
First known performance of an English miracle play, <i>S. Catharine</i> , given at Dunstable.		112,
	1110	175
Abbot Ailred of Rivaulx Abbey, Yorkshire, protests against elaborate vocal (apparently four-part) music, and multiplicity of instruments in church. <i>cir</i>	1150	143
Rounds and canons are common in England about this time ( <i>vide</i> Archdeacon Wm. Mapes). <i>cir</i>	1175	156
Adamus Dorensis, Abbot of Door, writes <i>Rudimenta Musices</i> . <i>cir</i>	1180	—
Organists in "that part of England called West Country discover the true tuning of the Third." <i>cir</i>	1189	151
Richard I. discovered in castle of Durrenstein through a song composed by him and his minstrel Blondel.	1193	54-55

## THIRTEENTH CENTURY.

A musical society exists in London called "Le Pui." "Sang-scules" are established in Scotland during this century. Tropes as a <i>system</i> were extinct at the begin- ning of the century, though a considerable number sur- vived for over three centuries.		66, 125 195, 205
Minstrels turn fortune of battle at Rhuydland.	1212	58
Walter Odington: treatises of classic standing.	1217	194
Johannes de Garlandia invents Double Counter- point. <i>cir</i>	1220	153
"Summer is icumen in," written [also composed?] by John Fornsete.	1226	54, 154
Simon Tailler, a Scot, writes four treatises. <i>cir</i>	1240	—
<i>Angelus ad Virginem</i> , earliest Anglo-Saxon sacred song known. <i>cir</i>	1250	94, 118
The King's minstrel is addressed by the title Magister.	1252	—
An English Country Dance, the oldest known dance of which a copy exists, dates from <i>cir</i>	1260	86-88
The founding of the Festival of Corpus Christi in- creases the number of miracle-plays; every consider- able town performs them.	1264	—
Alfredus Anglicus writes <i>De Musica</i> . <i>cir</i>	1270	—

# CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

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	YEAR	PAGE
Edward I. is said to have endeavoured to exterminate the Welsh bards owing to their independent political influence. (Statement much questioned.)	1284	17
426 minstrels attend the marriage of Edward I.'s daughter	1290	39
FOURTEENTH CENTURY.		
The minstrels' gallery of this century in Exeter Cathedral includes representation of bagpipe.	—	92
Celtic harp, and probably Irish jig, introduced into Italy.	1300	—
Six Kings of the Minstrels attend <i>cour pleniére</i> of Edward I.	1306	60
A law passed to check abuse of minstrelsy.	1315	25, 64
Bishop Richard Ledrede, a Londoner, writes hymns to minstrel tunes and takes them to his Irish diocese of Ossory.	1318—	103
Robert de Handlo writes <i>Regula cum maximus magistri Franconis</i> , a standard text-book for centuries.	1360	<i>et seq.</i>
College of Windsor (S. George's Chapel) with six choristers, founded by Edward III.	1326	194
Bands of "Weyghtes" or Oboi employed by Edward III.	1327	—
Bagpipers sent by Edward III. to visit foreign minstrel schools.	1327	68
Lionel Power, author of first musical treatise <i>written in English</i> ; referred to by Morley, 1597.	1327	92
Memorial brass, S. Margaret's Church, King's Lynn, depicts banquet with four attendant minstrels.	1350	194
Richard of Maidstone's poem on Richard II. mentions sixteen contemporary instruments.	1364	68
	1393	92
FIFTEENTH CENTURY.		
The Dunstable epoch in composition.	1400—	
An angel playing a bagpipe represented on a crozier given to William of Wykeham.	1420	160
Trumpets and drums used at battle of Harlaw, near Aberdeen.	1403	92
	1411	—

	YEAR	PAGE
The "Morality" play, precursor of drama, time of Henry VI.	1422-	
The Minstrel pillar in S. Mary's Church, Beverley.	1460	72, 112
A description of the coronation banquet of Henry VI. contains first known occurrence of the afterwards much used word "ballad."	1422-60	61
First [?] use of the crotchet, Thomas de Walsingham.	1429	—
Great bell of Gloucester hung.	1440	—
Bards classified by laws of Scotland with beggars and vagabonds.	cir 1450	—
First known British degree in music, <i>Mus. Bac.</i> , conferred by Cambridge University on Henry Habington.	1450	25
James III. of Scotland establishes a Chapel Royal at Stirling.	1463	195
March of "The Men of Harlech": earliest known march.	cir 1465	—
Edward IV. grants a charter to a Fraternity and Sisterhood of Musicians, and in it refers to previous charters.	1468	167
John Hamboys, first known Doctor of Music, writes treatises.	1469	66
Office of Master of the Choristers, Chapel Royal, existent.	1470	—
The bagpipe becomes common in Scotland towards the end of Fifteenth Century.	1473	108, 116
A Spanish writer of this date begins his history of music with Dunstable.	cir 1480	92
Gilbert Banistir, of Edward IV. Chapel Royal, writes dramas.	1480	—
Men and boys are "impressed" for Chapels Royal and other churches.	1482	72
"Wilzean, sangster of Lithgow" is paid £10 for a song book.	1483	109
First known Oxford degree in music: Robert Wydow.	1489	—
	1499	—
SIXTEENTH CENTURY.		
The "Cushion Dance" or "Kiss in the Ring" common among all classes this and succeeding centuries.	—	—

# CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

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	YEAR	PAGE
The Hugh Aston period of florid instrumental composition.	1500—	
Galliard dance in England.	1520	164
Sellenger's Round, a noted dance-tune.	1500	—
A Proclamation suppressing "fond [ <i>i.e.</i> foolish] books, ballads, rhymes and other lewd treatises in the English tongue."	1509	—
First known lay organist.	1533	74
Ballads multiply during the reign of Edward VI.	1540	77, 116
Wedderburn in his <i>Complaynt of Scotland</i> , published at Paris, says that "Cow thou me the rasches grene" was a current popular song.	1547-53	75
Marbeke's Booke of Common Praier "Noted."	1549	—
An edict under Q. Mary "against books, ballads, rhymes, and treatises" appears to have been effectual, for few of her reign remain.	1550	124
Under Elizabeth the ballad degenerates and is confined to the lower classes.	1553	75
Q. Elizabeth's Injunctions provide for the "continuance of syngynge in the church."	1558	75
796 ballads left for entry at Stationers' Hall remained at the end of this year for transfer to the new wardens and only 44 books.	1559	—
A rare edition of Marot and Beza's Psalter (sold at Sotheby's, 1918) contains a numeral notation of which the editor claims the invention: dated	1560	75
A copy of the same psalter, but with sol-fa initials against each note, believed to be unique, is in Innerpeffray Library, Perthshire, dated	1560	182
"Robin, lend to me thy bow" entered at Stationers' Hall	1567	182
<i>Brief Introduction to the true art of Musicke</i> , by William Bathe, an Irish Jesuit, "the first [ <i>printed</i> ] standard work in English on musical theory," published. See under 1339.	1568	—
First recorded Scottish military use of bagpipes, battle of Balrinnies.	1584	184
	1594	—



	YEAR	PAGE
An Act by which "minstrels wandering abroad" were held to be "rogues, vagabonds, and sturdy beggars" may be taken as extinguishing the ancient profession of minstrel.	1597	25, 78
Morley's <i>Plaine and Easie Introduction to Practical Musicke</i> , a classic.	1597	194
Mystery play, <i>The Three Kings of Cologne</i> , given at Newcastle-on-Tyne [the last in Great Britain?].	1599	—
SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.		
Madrigal composing wanes during the first quarter of this century.	—	—
Mary Macleod, authoress of words, and probably music, of Hebridean folk-songs.	cir 1600	46
The first glee, <i>Turn Amaryllis</i> : Thomas Brewer.	1602	177
Vocal music often published as also "apt for viols" during reign of James I. "Impressing" for choirs ceases.	1603	109
James I. grants new charter to the Musicians' Company.	1604	67
Sir George Beck, in a treatise, declares London musicians "equal to any in Europe for their skill either in composing and setting, or in singing, or for playing on any kind of musically instruments."	1604	—
Rhythm of famous English military march "beaten in the presence of Prince Henry" at Greenwich.	1610	168
Great bell at Lincoln founded.	1610	—
" <i>Parthenia</i> ," a famous collection of virginal music and the first music for that instrument ever printed.	1611	165
First Irish degree in music granted by University of Dublin to Thomas Bateson.	1612	—
Transition begins from masque to opera: dialogue in Lanier's setting of Ben Jonson's masque <i>Lethe</i> being sung.	1617	—
Queen Henrietta Maria plays "Chloris" in Ben Jonson's masque <i>Chlorida</i> .	1630	—
Shirley's masque <i>Triumph of Peace</i> given with lavish magnificence at Whitehall.	1632	100

# CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

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	YEAR	PAGE
Milton's masque <i>Comus</i> , with music by Henry Lawes, produced at Ludlow Castle.	1634	101
A harmonized psalter by Edward Miller of Holvrood Chapel, Edinburgh, published, the harmonizings by "the primest musicians that ever this kingdom had, as John Dean Angus, Blackhall, Smith, Sharp, Black, Buchan and others" (reprinted 1864).	1635	—
The organ in Holyrood destroyed; choir turned out; church music reduced.	1637	—
Davis Mell, first English violinist of note, <i>flourished</i>	1650	198
First edition of Playford's <i>Dancing Master</i> , a classic.	1651	137
First use of bar-lines in single voice parts: Henry Lawes.	1653	—
Shirley's masque <i>Cupid and Death</i> , music by Gibbons and Locke, performed in London by command of Cromwell.	1653	—
The Sons of the Clergy Festival, which acquired musical importance, founded.	1655	—
Mrs. Colman as Ianthe in <i>The Siege of Rhodes</i> , the first woman to appear on the stage in public.	1656	136
The "Fansies" and other pieces by John Jenkins, the typical instrumental composer of the period, are short-lived but show remarkable independence of vocal forms and acquire an almost European reputation. <i>cf.</i>	1660	166
"The new tied note" ( <i>i.e.</i> quaver hooks grouped): Playford.	1660	—
Clifford's <i>Divine Services and Anthems</i> , the first book of its kind printed in England.	1663	—
The first public concert ( <i>i.e.</i> admission to anyone on payment) known, at Oxford.	1670	207
First public concert in London, December 30th.	1672	207
First collection in which glees are specially mentioned, Playford's <i>Musical Companion</i> .	1673	—
Largest peal of bells in England: Exeter; founding begun.	1675	—
Round note-heads instead of lozenge-shaped: Playford.	1675	—
Purcell's <i>Dido and Æneas</i> .	1680	171

	YEAR	PAGE
S. Cecilia Choral Festival established.	1683	—
<i>Lilliburlero</i> , doggerel verse with good tune, contributes greatly towards the Great Revolution.	1688	—
Bards cease in Ireland with battle of the Boyne.	1690	26
Purcell's <i>King Arthur</i> .	1691	—
Rev. Dr. Wm. Holder's <i>Treatise on the natural grounds and principles of Harmony</i> is epoch-making in breaking away from the artificial theories previously prevalent : published in London.	1694	—
Thomas Cross, London, first to issue single songs as separate publications.	<i>cir</i> 1697	—
Mrs. Mary Battell, All Saints, Hertford, first recorded lady organist.	<i>died</i> 1698	—
EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.		
Dr. Pepusch, a German, settled in London ; first in Britain to study mediæval music.	<i>cir</i> 1700	—
Charity Children's Festival established.	1704	—
First English opera after the Italian model, by Richard Leveridge.	1705	—
Handel arrives in England.	1710	—
Academy of Ancient Music founded.	1710	—
First entirely Italian opera performed in England, <i>Almahide</i> ; composer unknown.	1710	—
Office of Lutenist to Chapel Royal, S. James', instituted.	1715	—
English Country Dance introduced into France.	1715	49
Double chant invented [by Rev. L. Flintoft ?]	<i>cir</i> 1720	—
The Three Choirs Festival (Gloucester, Worcester, Hereford) established on a permanent basis.	1724	—
<i>The Gentle Shepherd</i> , Scottish pastoral play of ballad-opera type, verses by Allan Ramsay, becomes immensely successful.	1725	—
<i>The Beggar's Opera</i> acquires phenomenal popularity.	1727	179
Hon. R. North's "Memoirs of Music" first English history of music.	1728	—
Royal Society of Musicians founded.	1738	—
Samuel Webbe, first great master of the Glee : his adult life was coeval with its best period.	1740— 1816	—

# CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

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	YEAR	PAGE
Madrigal Society established by John Immyns.	1741	—
First Welsh Collection of folk-songs.	1742	—
Manchester Gentlemen's Concerts in existence.	1745	—
Bards cease in Scotland with abolition of hereditary jurisdictions.	1748	26
Hymns are gradually introduced in addition to metrical psalms, which previously held the field almost alone.	<i>cir</i> 1750	128
After centuries of popularity flute-playing declines.	<i>cir</i> 1750	—
Death of Handel in London.	<i>cir</i> 1759	—
Repeating type of hymn-tune (i.e. <i>Miles Lane</i> ) comes into vogue.	<i>cir</i> 1760	—
First public use of piano for accompaniment took place in London; accompanist, "Mr. Dibdin."	1767	197
First public use of piano as solo instrument: London, John Christian Bach.	1768	197
Birmingham Choral Festival established.	1768	—
Norwich Choral Festival.	1770	—
Chester Choral Festival.	1772	—
Niel Gow, eminent Scottish violinist and interpreter of national airs.	<i>flourished</i> 1774	—
Sir John Hawkins and Dr. Burney publish their Histories of Music.	1776	200
James Aird, Glasgow, first to print <i>Ranky Doodle</i> .	1778	—
First printed collection of bagpipe tunes: Rev. Patrick Macdonald, Edinburgh.	1784	—
Liverpool Choral Festival.	1790	—
York Choral Festival.	1791	—
Pedals added to organ in Westminster Abbey.	1792	—
First Knighthood granted to a British musician.	1795	—
The piano supersedes the harpsichord in the King's Band.	1796	—
NINETEENTH CENTURY.		
	1800—	—
Flute-playing is revived and becomes very popular.	1840	—
A player of the crwyth still living at Carnavon.	1801	42
Charles Nicolson's flute-playing gives foreign artists "much ground for thought."	<i>cir</i> 1816	—

	YEAR	PAGE
The first British musical periodical, <i>The Quarterly Musical Magazine and Review</i> , established: it was continued till 1829.	1818	—
Royal Academy of Music founded.	1822	—
First woman pianist at Philharmonic concerts: Lucy Anderson.	1822	—
<i>The Harmonicon</i> : first British musical monthly: continued till 1833.	1823	—
<i>The Musical World</i> : first British musical weekly: continued till 1891.	1836	—
Sir W. S. Bennett's <i>Naiades</i> overture.	1836	—
Bristol Madrigal Society instituted.	1837	—
Balfe's <i>Bohemian Girl</i> .	1843	—
<i>Musical Times</i> founded.	1844	—
Miss Glover publishes her Norwich Modulator restoring Guido's sol-fa syllables to their original relative pitch use.	1845	185
Vincent Wallace's <i>Maritana</i> .	1845	—
Office of Lutenist to S. James' Chapel Royal (long a sinecure) abolished.	1846	—
First (:) Canadian degree in music: James Paton Clarke ( <i>Mus. Bac.</i> ), University of King's College, Toronto ( <i>Mus. Doc.</i> 1856).	1846	—
Royal Irish Academy of Music founded.	1848	—
Cheadle Association for promotion of Church Music, the germ of Diocesan Choral Festivals, founded.	1849	—
<i>Tonic sol-fa Reporter</i> (now <i>Musical Herald</i> ).	1853	—
First Diocesan Choral Festival: Lichfield Cathedral.	1856	—
Triennial Handel Festival: Crystal Palace: established.	1857	—
The Halle Concerts, Manchester.	1857	—
Leeds Festival established.	1858	—
St. James' Hall, London, opened.	1858	—
<i>Musical Standard</i> .	1862	—
Tonic sol-fa College founded.	1863	—
Royal College of Organists instituted.	1864	—
<i>The Monthly Musical Record</i> founded.	1871	—
Trinity College of Music, London, incorporated.	1875	—

# CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

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	YEAR	PAGE
<i>Musical Opinion.</i>	1877	—
First local examinations in music (theory) instituted by Trinity College, London.	1877	—
T.C.L. Practical Local Examinations.	1879	—
University of London grants degrees in music.	1879	—
Guildhall School of Music founded.	1880	—
Royal University of Ireland, degrees in music: women eligible.	1880	—
Royal College of Music founded.	1882	—
Augusta Mary Wakefield founds the Westmorland Competitive Festival, initiating a scheme which rapidly spreads throughout the kingdom and becomes "the most vital movement in the musical life of England to-day."	1885	—
Ormond Chair of Music, University of Melbourne, Australia, founded.	1887	—
Hovingham, Yorkshire, village musical festival founded: Dr. Joachim a frequent visitor.	1887	—
Toronto College of Music founded.	1888	—
<i>Musical News.</i>	1891	—
First degrees in music granted by a Scottish University, Edinburgh: women eligible.	1893	—
University of Wales, degrees in music: women eligible.	1894	—
Sheffield Musical Festival established.	1896	—
University of Durham, degrees in music: women eligible.	1897	—
Feis Coeil, Irish Musical Festival, founded.	1897	—
A characteristic of the last decade of this century was the progress made in the production of music by mechanical means—pianolas and phonographs.		
TWENTIETH CENTURY.		
Midland Institute School of Music, Birmingham, founded; Granville Bantock first Principal.	1900	—
Sir Edward Elgar's <i>Dream of Gerontius</i> .	1900	—
Adelaide University, Australia, School of Music founded.	1904	—
Elder Conservatorium of Music, Adelaide, Australia, founded.	1910	—

## CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

	YEAR	PAGE
Conservatorium of Music, Sydney University, Australia.	1912	—
<i>South African Musical Times</i> established.	1913	—
Capetown, S. Africa, Municipal Orchestra instituted	1914	—
£600,000 expended or promised by Mr. Andrew Carnegie and his Trustees towards erection of church organs, to date December 31st.	1915	—
The Carnegie Trust undertakes the publication of from one to six symphonic or other large works by British composers, annually; has under consideration a scheme for their public performance; undertakes the production after the war, in library and popular editions, by the Clarendon Press, of Tudor and Elizabethan church music; and considers a scheme for a Musical Loan Library.	1916	—
The following works accepted for publication by the Carnegie Trustees:—E. L. Bainton, symphony <i>Before Sunrise</i> ; Granville Bantock, <i>Hebridean Symphony</i> ; Frank Bridge, symphonic suite <i>The Sea</i> ; H. Howells, <i>Pianoforte Quartet in A Minor</i> ; Sir C. V. Stanford, opera <i>The Travelling Companion</i> ; R. Vaughan Williams, <i>The London Symphony</i> .	1917	—
The Carnegie Trust accepts the following works for publication:—Lawrence Arthur Collingwood, <i>Symphonic Poem for Full Orchestra</i> ; Alfred M. Wall, <i>Quartet in C Minor</i> for pianoforte, viol'in, viola and violoncello; Edward Norman Hay, <i>String Quartet in A Major</i> ; William Wallace, symphonic poem for full orchestra, <i>Wallace 1305—1905</i> .	1918	—
The British Music Society founded by Dr. Eaglefield Hull, for the fostering of British Music. Information Bureau in London, Branches in towns of United Kingdom, Representatives in European cities and America. Study circles, concerts, lectures, conferences to be organised. The patron is the Rt. Hon. A. J. Balfour, the president Lord Howard de Walden, and the Central Committee consists of public men who have interested themselves in music.	1918	—



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## PREFACE

THE object of this little book is to supply English readers with concise biographies of French Musicians from Lully to the beginning of the 19th century (a period covering about 200 years), reflecting in some measure the conditions and influences of the times in which they lived and worked. Although not all were born on French soil, France was so entirely the land of their adoption that they must be reckoned among her musicians.

For detailed analysis of their works, readers are referred to the Authors mentioned in the Bibliography.



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# THE EARLIER FRENCH MUSICIANS

## CHAPTER I

JEAN BAPTISTE LULLY  
1632-1687

JEAN Baptiste Lully,<sup>1</sup> born an Italian, left his native land as a child and identified himself so completely with France and French music that (quite apart from the legal formula of naturalisation) he must be reckoned a French musician. Little is known of his family, and his enemies were probably right in declaring that he was of humble birth. Lulli was a common name at that time in Florence. In or near that city Jean Baptiste was born (29th November, 1632) and baptised on the same day, as was then customary, his parents being one Lorenzo Lulli and Caterina del Sera his wife.

Of his childhood we only know that he loved music and that a monk of the Cordeliers (Grey

<sup>1</sup> He changed Lulli into Lully in France, probably after naturalisation, and all documents signed by him have this spelling.

Friars) taught him the guitar, with a smattering of musical knowledge. Something—perhaps his playing—brought him, a lad of fourteen, to the notice of the Chevalier de Guise, who was travelling through Italy and anxious to find “un joli petit Italien” for his cousin, Mademoiselle de Montpensier, that lady having expressed a wish to practise her Italian. Jean Baptiste was taken, 1646, to France in the Chevalier’s train, but not being sufficiently “joli,” was sent to Mademoiselle’s kitchen. Tradition says that his guitar playing attracted attention and he was presently placed among the musicians of her household; another version has it that he was made “garçon de la chambre de la princesse.” The former sounds more probable, considering Lully’s antecedents, but the legend matters little, save as proving that the boy’s musical gifts were considered extraordinary and secured his promotion; “La guitare l’avait tiré de la marmite,” ran the saying.

At Mademoiselle’s court in the Tuileries there was plenty of music; balls, concerts, serenades, ballets succeeded each other all the year round and Lully found scope for his talents although he only received a meagre salary. The great lady, like other distinguished personages, had her own band of musicians, among them six violins; Lully learnt the violin with his usual quickness and before long was composing airs for this instrument. Here, too, he formed a friendship destined to shape

events in his future life with a singer and composer named Michael Lambert, in Mademoiselle's service and of some repute. Mademoiselle pensioned this singer generously when he left her service, for in fact artists were usually treated very liberally by their rich patrons.

In 1652 Mademoiselle, who had espoused the cause of the Frondeurs, left Paris for the provinces and Lully with the rest of the household accompanied her. But life in the country was not to the young man's taste and Mademoiselle records in her Memoirs: "He would not stay in the country; he asked permission to leave me and I granted it. Since then he has made his way, for he is a great baladin" (dancer of lively airs). Or was it (as the story goes) that the mischievous Lully wrote ribald verses about his protectress and was dismissed in consequence? However that may be, his dismissal was only a further step to advancement, for three months later, behold! Lully at Court, taking part in the *Ballet de la nuit*, actually in five different rôles, and by the following month, March, he had already stepped into the post of *Compositeur de la musique instrumentale*, opportunely vacant through the death of another Italian musician, Lazzarini.

From this time Lully's talents had ample opportunity. He collaborated with Court musicians, danced in ballets, most frequently by the side of the King Louis XIV (at this time a youth of fourteen) and "played the violin divinely" according

to La Viéville. Perhaps at this time it was the young Italian's dancing which especially delighted the Court. He was so agile, so full of droll capers and devices, always ready to "make up" for any rôle, to wear any costume, however fantastic, in short, to do anything likely to amuse. But deeper than all this lay the real goal of Lully's genius, music. Of this he was conscious. By no means was he content to remain simply a fine dancer, a good violinist, a court favourite whose drolleries amused. And before long came the first step towards more serious work.

The Court Musicians formed an orchestra of European reputation known as "les violons du roi" and the twenty-four violinists composing it played dances at all the court balls and fêtes. Lully boldly criticised their performances as too elaborate and artificial, "trop précieuses et tourmentées" (they were, in fact, too full of contrapuntal devices); he advocated a simpler style. The king allowed him to form a smaller band, "les petits violons," whom he trained until they rivalled the others.

Lully's career was one of extraordinary and, as it seems, inevitable success. His lucky star brought him to Court at the precise moment favourable to his type of character and genius, brought him to a king, Louis XIV, who appreciated and protected him from the first: the young musician found a young king of artistic tastes and who loved music especially, more in fact than any other art.

Their natures, too, were congenial; both were Renaissance types, fond of life as well as art, fond of a life of gaiety, gallantry and magnificence. The young king loved to dance (which he did very well) by the side of Lully in the Court ballets. And, what is rarely the case with Court favourites, the monarch remained a faithful friend throughout Lully's life, pardoning his *escapades* and rewarding him with princely generosity. The Grand Monarque always honestly preferred Lully's music to any other. There is a pretty story of his reply in later life (many years later), to an Italian Ambassador, who presented a celebrated violinist to His Majesty. The king listened to the brilliant performance of the *virtuoso*, then ordered one of his own violinists to perform an air by M. Lully. At its close, turning to the Ambassador, he said simply: "Que voulez-vous, Monsieur? *This* is the music I love."

Lully was speedily at home in Court life. His wit and vivacity, his dominant personality, backed by real genius, made him interesting, whilst his caustic tongue was a dreaded weapon if courtiers were inclined to snub.

The Court obviously offered splendid opportunities to artists in those days.

There was the intercourse with fellow musicians, constant rehearsals and productions new and old, an atmosphere of art. More than all these was the invaluable opportunity of trying experiments. A new composition, simple dance or ballet, could be

produced at once and its effect judged under the most favourable conditions. The king himself took the keenest interest in any new composition. Later he was fond of suggesting subjects for opera or pastorale and loved to have a composer under his eye, so to speak, as was the case in after years with Lalande, whom His Majesty would visit every day "to see how he was getting on," a solicitude doubtless embarrassing to its object. Louis could play the lute, the guitar, the harpsichord, and sang very well. He also composed small *Airs*, notably a pretty *courante*. Music was the art he loved best.

In spite of Court duties and pleasures Lully, conscious of deficiencies in his musical education, set himself to study. He found time to work under three different organists (Roberday, Métry, Gigault), studying counterpoint and composition. As regards these teachers, Roberday taught somewhat vaguely that "what pleases the ear should always be accepted as a rule of music" (*the ear being apparently unspecified*). Gigault was fond of using old French songs and chants as themes for fugues. Lully also learnt to play the harpsichord with his usual facility.

On May 30th, 1655, he took part in the ballet *Les Bienvenus* as a dancer, dressed in grotesque costume, but in the following year he composed the music of a long "scène infernale" for the ballet *Psyché*. And after this date his compositions were preferred to all others at Court.

Mademoiselle spoke contemptuously of Lully dancing himself into fame as a "baladin," but she failed to appreciate his real genius. Although his gifts as actor and dancer undoubtedly made him popular, his lasting success was founded on more solid basis. Whatever he undertook, he did well. For instance, when Lully came to Paris, nearly half the musicians were unable to sing or read from score, learning their parts by ear. But Lully insisted that all who came under his *bâton* should learn to read music, and at his death there were very few singers or instrumentalists who were not really proficient in the art of reading at sight.

In a very short time Lully's reputation was established and his life became a constant and broadening stream of success. He collaborated in the various ballets which succeeded each other at Court, such as *L'Amour Malade*, *La Baillerie*, *Alcidiane*, and was universally acclaimed "incomparable."

In other styles he excelled equally, producing (1660) a motet "admirablement harmonique" on the double event of the marriage of the King and the Peace of the Pyrenees. In the same year Mazarin invited the Venetian, Francesco Cavalli to Paris, the Italian master's opera *Xerxès* being performed at Versailles; Lully wrote some ballet music for it. But after his promotion to the post of *Surintendant de la musique*<sup>1</sup> (on the death of an

<sup>1</sup> The Surintendants each served 3-4 months in the year at Court.



old musician named Cambefort) Lully became more markedly French in the style of his music.

Later (in 1666)<sup>1</sup> he showed his predilection for his adopted country by applying for naturalisation in France, a request which was granted in most flattering terms.

The new *Surintendant* still enjoyed performing in the ballets with his usual verve and drollery, and Paris rang with mirth when Lully took the part of "*L'Aveugle*" in the *Ballet de L'Impatience* in the same year. There are pictures of him in all kinds of costumes: as a beggar, as a Turk, as an "*Académiste de Chiron*," with his face blackened.<sup>2</sup> And he enjoyed life to the full, a life of dissipation and excess, sometimes with episodes of more than doubtful character, until his marriage to some extent acted as a sobering influence. His wife was the only daughter of that Lambert whose acquaintance he had made when in the service of Mademoiselle. The lady brought him a dowry of 20,000 *livres* but a rather unamiable disposition, being somewhat of a scold. Perhaps the union was due to prudence rather than affection—Lully had sound business instincts—but in any case the King was delighted, appointed his favourite "*Maître de la musique de la famille royale*" with

<sup>1</sup> In 1666 it is worthy of note that the King dismissed all his Italian musicians, perhaps at Lully's instigation, for Lully had set his face against the Italian style of music.

<sup>2</sup> On grand occasions the Court orchestra usually wore a costume in keeping with the Opera to be performed. Lully, for instance, once conducted in Egyptian dress, "but very magnificent."

the sum of 30,000 *livres* to be paid to his heirs, and signed the marriage contract, as did also the Queen Mother, Marie Thérèse, the Duc de Rochecouart, Colbert and other great personages.

Under such auspicious circumstances, at the Church of St. Eustace, 24th July 1662, was solemnized the marriage of Lully the musician, who had come from Florence a poor, unknown lad some twenty years before.

Six children were born, three boys and three girls, within as many years. Their mother devoted herself to her children and home life, she was not fond of society, and Lully, although he does not seem to have been very devoted to her, was certainly less dissipated after his marriage. He presented an edifying spectacle on Sundays, says the chronicle, when he accompanied his family to the Church of St. Roch, sitting in a pew with a door *à clef*.

Whatever Lully's faults, idleness was not one of them; he was an indefatigable worker, and after his marriage he worked harder than ever. He composed unceasingly the ever popular *grand ballets* which contained symphonies, recitatives, airs and dialogues on operatic lines; also religious music such as *Motets* and the beautiful *Miserere* performed at the funeral of Chancellor Séguier (1664), the music of which, Madame de Sévigné declared, could not be surpassed by the music of Heaven.

In 1661 began Lully's collaboration with Molière

in "Comédies ballets," in which dancing and singing enlivened the more serious business of the play. In their first production, *Les Fâcheux*, Lully, however, only took part as an actor in the rôle of an "Augure musicale," the music being by Beauchamp.

But in the next "Comédie ballet," *Le Mariage Forcé*, Lully wrote the music and in the same year (1664) "les deux grands Baptistes," as the two were familiarly styled, produced at the King's request *La Princesse d'Élide*, a great success.

This piece was first performed at the Grand Fêtes given at Versailles (5 May 1664) really in honour of La Vallière. In Paris it was more richly decorated than anything hitherto attempted on the French stage and ran from May through the summer, when Cardinal Chigi visited Paris. In honour of his visit Lully also wrote some music for Corneille's *Oedipe*, which was performed before the Cardinal (August 1664).

*L'Amour médecin*, performed at Versailles (1665) was another triumph for the two Baptistes; although Molière generously attributed its success to the "incomparable M. de Lully." One ballet followed another. There was a constant succession of Court events imperatively demanding musical recognition and Lully was inexhaustible in his occasional inspirations such as the *Ballet de la Naissance de Vénus*, *Ballet de Créquez ou la Triomphe de Bacchus dans les Indes*.

The expiration of the Court mourning for the

death of Anne of Austria (the Queen Mother) inspired a "Comédie ballet" and in this *Ballet des Muses* the versatile Lully himself performed a violin concerto.

For the baptism of the Dauphin (March 1668) he composed a beautiful *Plaulo letare*.

The great Racine also offered to collaborate with Lully and wrote for him *La Chute de Phæton*, 1665.

And during his collaboration with Molière this indefatigable musician found time to compose to *libretti* supplied by Benserade.

The Ballet was not what it is to-day. It contained singing and acting as well as dancing, and from it opera gradually evolved. Mythological subjects were the favourites, in fact almost the only ones. For nearly two hundred years the public never wearied of the *amours* of gods and goddesses, of shepherds, nymphs, fauns, framed in classic landscapes and French Court dress. From the fifteenth to the end of the seventeenth centuries this form of art was popular, a reflection of the classic régime in France, crystallising into rigid operatic conventions which ultimately fell to pieces before the new ideals of the Revolution.

These Ballets, Mascarades or Pastorales, were a series of pictures or slight incidents strung together without any real connecting link.

The *Ballet de la Nuit*, for instance, introduced episodes of thieves, soldiers, the loves of Diana and Endymion and other matter appropriate to the

hours of darkness but not otherwise apparently related.

Subjects like the Four Seasons, the Four Elements also appealed to French musicians with their fondness for descriptive or imitative music. The storms of summer and winter winds were as suggestive as the exploits of Vulcan and Neptune. Lully, for instance, in *Isis* conveys the idea of cold and shivering by repeated notes.

When Lully began to write he kept to the old lines, at first collaborating with other musicians in the Court ballets, then surpassing them by the beauty of his music and improving the whole production.

The Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle in the same year (18 July 1668) called forth a "Grand Divertissement de Versailles," in which the *pièce de résistance* was again a comédie ballet, "Georges Dandin" (probably a first version of *Georges Dandin*).

This was performed with more than 100 executants and scored a tremendous success. In the *Grotte de Versailles*, another Pastorale (also performed the same year in the famous grotto of Versailles, a triumph of the "rocailleurs" of the period), nightingales were imitated by a hydraulic organ to the great delight of the Court. Lully's ballet *Flore* was written with Benserade (13 February 1669) and the King danced in this ballet (February 1669), whilst in October of the same year Lully played the part of *Il Signor Chiacche*.

rone in the scene between two Italian musicians in *Monsieur de Pourceaugnac*. In these two productions Lully had greatly developed the musical side, so much so that in the latter the music took first place in public estimation, Lully being considered of more importance than Molière. Yet another Pastorale, *Les Amants Magnifiques* (4 February 1670). About this time an Envoy from the Porte visited Paris, with a resulting vogue for everything "exotique," and especially Turkish. Molière and Lully at once met the demand by a "Turquerie," and in the "Bourgeois Gentilhomme" (1670) the chief scene was a "Cérémonie turque," in which Lully, in a strange and wonderful costume, took the part of the Mufti. Great expenses were incurred in the production of this "bouffonnerie," no pains being spared to secure local colour. The costumes alone cost 12,000 livres (about £600) and the whole Court production four times as much. But this extravagance was justified by success. The King was delighted and never wearied of the performance. It is said that when Lully incurred His Majesty's displeasure by some particularly scandalous exploit he would contrive to play this part in order to dispense the clouds on the brow of "le roi soleil." And many years later, when Lully had slept a quarter of a century in his imposing tomb and Madame de Maintenon had banished gaiety from the Court, the old King commanded music of the *Turquerie* to be played again, as if trying to recall

former joyous days. Several Pastorales were written before the break with Molière.

*Psyché* (1671), a tragi-comedy, in which both Molière and Corneille collaborated, was a great success and had a three months' run.

*Pomone* in the same year, also a success.

Unfortunately, however, the two great Baptistes quarrelled; there are different versions of the reason, but probably Lully's grasping, domineering character gave sufficient cause. Molière found his theatrical venture at the Palais Royal seriously hampered by Lully's despotic powers of limiting the number of musicians to be employed, and he joined certain operatic directors in legal protest against Lully's privileges. But they were powerless against the favourite of the King.

The enormous amount of work accomplished by Lully is partly accounted for by collaboration.

It was customary for composers to sketch the outline, the melody of their works, indicating the harmony and then leaving the middle parts to be filled in by their pupils or by other musicians, much as painters allowed their pupils to fill in backgrounds, etc. These *Ripieni* were used in chorus and orchestral parts, collaboration being acknowledged in such terms as "M. Colasse wrote the accompaniments." Lully was not fond of ornaments and *fioritura* in his vocal music and often left these to be written by Lambert, his father-in-law. In fact there was a good deal of collaboration, which accounts for the great amount



of operatic music turned out to order and at short notice.

Lully found a new librettist in Quinault, a mild poet who submitted to his bullying and caprices. Quinault was engaged by contract to write one opera a year at an annual salary of 4,000 livres (about £200), but during their fourteen years partnership the two produced quite twenty works.

Their first joint production, *Les fêtes de l'amour et de Bacchus* (1672) was not a success, the music being really a *pot pourri* of dance tunes composed by Lully for the King's ballets, no plot. But noblemen deigned to dance in it at Court, and among them the Duke of Monmouth, who was visiting Paris at the time.

*Cadmus et Hermione*, "tragédie en musique"<sup>1</sup> (1673) pleased the Court greatly and was honoured by the presence of the King, Monsieur and Made-moiselle. The "Allégorie" of the serpent "Python" in the Prologue was especially admired and a criticism in the "Gazette Rimée" contains nothing but praise, somewhat naïvely expressed by a poetical critic:

"Cette aimable symphonie sans nul bruit de cacophonie."

*Cadmus et Hermione* is really Lully's first serious attempt at opera in contra-distinction to his

<sup>1</sup> "Tragédie" was really drama, not tragedy in our sense of the word. "Comédie" dealt with probable or possible happenings, whilst Opera was at first confined to supernatural or mythological subjects.



Pastorales and Ballets, and some account of it may be of interest.<sup>1</sup> The characters are a curious medley, including giants, heroes, a Python, soldiers, rural deities, chorus of winds in the air and subterranean winds, ten golden statues animated by Love. The distribution of voices seems peculiar according to our ideas, the hero being a bass or low baritone, whilst Hermione's nurse was sung by a male voice, the same singer taking also the rôle of a Tyrian Prince. It was customary at that time for the parts of old women or women supplying "comic relief" to be performed by men, a tradition still maintained in our pantomime.

The Prologue (which was of great importance) opens with rustic revels, in the midst of which Envy emerges from a cave in the centre of the stage. Then the terrible Python (a fore-runner of Fafnir) appears from a marshy swamp (*marais bourbeux*) in the background. The flames issuing from his mouth and eyes supply the only light in the darkened theatre. Simple (very simple) running passages accompany the Winds, whilst Envy sings a *recitative*, until fiery darts from above strike the Python, who falls writhing into his *marais bourbeux*. A Gavotte celebrates the triumph of the Sun, in whom intelligent courtiers recognised the Roi Soleil. The story of Cadmus and Hermione followed.

<sup>1</sup> The first French opera was Cambert's *Pomone*, but Cambert had not Lully's success. He came to England and became Court Musician to Charles II (1672).

Throughout the opera the tonality changes very little, which makes for a depressing monotony of effect; there is little rhythmic interest. The *recitative* is often fine although unduly long, and some of the airs are beautiful. It is recorded that a droll effect was produced at one performance by a singer, a vivacious and greatly admired lady. She was in the rôle of Pallas and, on being applauded, rose and made a graceful bow from her cloud, taking off her helmet and allowing her beautiful blonde hair to flow loosely about her shoulders to the delight of the public.

*Cadmus et Hermione* was produced 28 April 1673 and on the following day the appreciative monarch gave tangible proof of his satisfaction by granting Lully the right of performing his works in the Salle du Palais Royal where Molière's troupe had played and where, during a performance of his "Malade Imaginaire" poor Molière had breathed his last only two months before.

Lully was now absolute dictator in matters musical, not only in Paris but throughout the kingdom. Already in 1672 he had obtained the right of directing the Académie Royale de Musique, i.e. the Opera (practically an Opera Syndicate), the former director, Perrin, having failed financially.

Lully started it on a fresh basis, and Letters Patent conferred on him most arbitrary powers as Director of Opera. He was allowed to close a rival theatre in the rue Mazarine. He could pro-

hibit actors from employing more than two voices and six violins and henceforth no opera could be performed throughout the whole of France without Lully's permission, for which of course he charged.<sup>1</sup> His authority was absolute and supreme in all matters of music.

*Alceste* brought new triumphs, though not without dissentient voices. Madame de Sévigné was extremely enthusiastic and declared that this would surpass all Lully's previous works. The King had said, if he were in Paris when this opera was performed he should go every day. "These words are worth a hundred thousand livres to Baptiste" comments the astute lady. Again a few days before the first performance she wrote: "The Opera is a marvel of beauty, there are passages in the music which move me to tears. I am not alone in being overwhelmed, the soul of Madame de la Fayette, too, was troubled." But in spite of these sensitive vibrations of cultured ladies, sterner critics condemned the work. Musicians disapproved of the music. Poets said that Quinault had spoilt Euripides by introducing unnecessary episodes<sup>2</sup> and ribald verse alluded to "musique de chien" and "musique de diable." La Fon-

<sup>1</sup> He received 2,000 livres (francs) per annum from a Director of Opera at Marseilles, for instance.

<sup>2</sup> Many critics disapproved of Quinault's verses. There is a story that Lully's admirers once at a supper advanced threateningly on him with raised glasses, shouting in mock-heroic chorus, "Abandon Quinault or thou art a dead man."

taine, who was annoyed because Lully had refused his libretto of *Daphne*, wrote a skit, "Le Florentin," in which he compared Lully to a wolf. In short it was evident that the favourite of fortune had many enemies.

There was even a report that a librettist named Guichard, a gentleman in the household of the Duc d'Orléans, had plotted to poison Lully by means of snuff containing arsenic. Such devices were common enough in those days. Lully appealed to the King for protection against his enemies and the King told him to bring an action against Guichard. The affair dragged on for three years, involving many scandals, but in the end Guichard was acquitted. He had, however, lost his post in the service of the Duc d'Orléans and left Paris.

Lully was fond of property and apparently of building houses.

In 1670, having bought land, he borrowed money from Molière (they were working together at the time on the *Bourgeois Gentilhomme*), to the amount of 11,000 livres at a fair rate of interest and built himself a house. It was a fine large building, (still standing at the corner of the rue Sainte-Anne and the rue des Petits Champs), with all the appointments suitable to a rich man, a stable for three horses, etc., and in it Lully lived for some years. Not long after this occurred the unfortunate breach with Molière.

Later Lully bought a country house at Sèvres. Another dwelling he shared with his father-in-law,

Lambert, at Puteaux. Finally in 1683 he retired to another house which he had built in Ville l'Evesque (now 28 rue Boissy d'Anglas). This last home was in the midst of a large quiet garden. Here he composed his three latest operas (*Roland*, *Arnide*, *Acis et Galathée*) and here he died.

Attempts to collaborate with Racine and Boileau failed, owing doubtless to Lully's exacting, domineering character. Not one of the three poets, Racine, Boileau, La Fontaine, could satisfy him. He made his librettists write, alter, re-write continually. For *Bellérophon* Corneille and Fontenelle wrote over 2,000 lines, of which Lully only accepted about 200.

*Atys*, libretto by the docile Quinault, was performed (1676) and delighted the Court. Madame de Sévigné was again in raptures: "There are passages of extreme beauty; a 'Slumber' and 'Dreams' of surprising originality. The symphony is entirely in the bass strings and of such drowsy beauty that one admires Baptiste under a new aspect."

*Isis* (1677) was not quite so successful; the public condemned it as "too learned," the instrumental part being developed at too great sacrifice of the vocal.

Moreover Quinault, having incurred the displeasure of Madame de Montespan by a pointed allusion to her in this work, had to disappear for a time from Paris, depriving Lully of his librettist.

For a time Thomas Corneille wrote for him, re-

modelling the *Psyche* of 1671 into an opera, which with new music by Lully had some success (April 19 1678).

Then followed *Bellérophon*,<sup>1</sup> composed more slowly than usual, for Lully was ill at the time, and performed in the following year (31 January 1679). This was a greater success than any hitherto achieved. All Paris flocked to hear it and the Court honoured it by repeated visits. The King insisted on encoring all the most beautiful passages each time he attended the performance, even during the following year, when *Bellérophon* was performed at St. Germain (5 February 1680). The music was beautiful, the staging a triumph. The scene of the Elysian Fields designed by a Court artist was especially admired as a marvel of melancholy beauty.

In spite of the critics *Alceste* was performed at the Grand Fêtes given at Versailles in the summer of 1674 with the lavish splendour beloved of "le Roi Soleil." This opera and *Cadmus et Hermione* were produced in the marble court (open air), lighted by tall candelabra of silver placed along the sides of the court among rows of orange trees in silver tubs. The King's chair was placed on a platform with seats for the courtiers. The Palace and the lakes were illuminated, the fountains played through coloured lights, there were magnificent fireworks. Splendid collations were served

1 Thos. Corneille and Fontenelle, librettists.

in leafy arbours, the tables lighted by thousands of candles in candelabra of silver, with the rarest fruits and flowers in gold and silver dishes.

After listening to the Opera or a play by Racine or Molière the King and his Court would promenade until dawn or embark in flower-wreathed gondolas on the lake. Such were the Fêtes of the classic days of Versailles in which the Roi Soleil strove to capture all the beauty and joy of life. La Vallière's star was no longer in the ascendant. These Fêtes were in honour of Madame de Montespan. But the splendour and magnificence were always the same. Lully was always the idolised musician. At yet another Grand Fête the opera was his famous *Roland* (1685).

The weather in that summer being rainy and the Marble Court impossible, the *manège* (riding school) was transformed in a few hours into an Opera house, lest the King should be disappointed. At noon horses were exercising in the *manège*, by evening it had been transformed into a splendid theatre with raised platform for His Majesty, seats for spectators, the usual brilliant candelabra, a stage embowered in orange trees, groves of other trees lining the walls, . . . such were the resources of Versailles.

Versailles the magnificent, the lordly pleasure-house, built at such fearful cost of money and human life, whose upkeep was the despair of Colbert, was the Earthly Paradise in which Louis XIV loved to forget earthly cares. His ideal was



an enchanted spot in which he could realise all beauty, natural and artistic, sculpture, painting, music—above all music—gardens of rare trees and exotic flowers, beautiful women and a glittering court. “Surtout beaucoup de fleurs” was always his command, “mais de fleurs tardives ou avancées,” a characteristic touch, for His Majesty took no delight in ordinary flowers, he must have exotics or flowers forced out of their season: tuberose, Dutch tulips, orange blossoms; and the potted plants in the parterres must be changed every day, sometimes twice a day, lest their monotony should weary the eye of the royal aesthete.<sup>1</sup> Debt troubled him little. The discomfort of courtiers crowded in dark corners behind the magnificent exterior troubled him not at all. Outward splendour marking dirt and misery made Versailles the characteristic symbol of the period.

But the Grand Fêtes dazzled all beholders. In all some eight or nine of these wonderful Fêtes were given between 1663-1674, the first in honour of La Vallière, that of 1674 to celebrate Mme. de Montespan. Lully was always the chief director as well as the great composer of these *divertissements*. He was indispensable and Louis XIV realised it, he was terribly afraid of losing “a man of such talent as M. de Lully,” a man who understood the art of splendid amusement. Besides, Lully’s genius celebrated “le Roi Soleil” and his achievements. The conquering hero who kills the

<sup>1</sup> E. Lavisse, *Histoire de France*.



Python, the benevolent Majesty adored by his people was always "le Roi Soleil," the hero of wars, victories, glories, etc. His Majesty often suggested points which he wished especially to emphasise, such as the snub to Madame de Montespan (for which Quinault suffered), when she had bored him with jealousy about the Comtesse de Ludes. Everyone recognised Mme. de Montespan in the jealous Juno who persecutes the charming nymph Isis.

Emerging from his temporary eclipse in connection with this affair, Quinault wrote *Proserpine* (1679), over which Madame de Sevigné again waxed enthusiastic, proclaiming "This opera surpasses all the others." Certain more critical Lullystes, however, betrayed weariness of this style and clamoured for something different.

"Lully, donne-moi d'autres tons  
Ou bien je me retire."

The Court at St. Germain was greatly pleased with a ballet *Triomphe de l'Amour* (21 January 1681), in which several great personages took part, the *clou* being Mademoiselle de Nantes, a young lady not quite eight years of age,<sup>1</sup> who danced with castenets to the delight of all beholders.

This was presented to the general public in Paris (6th May 1681) and charmed every one.

<sup>1</sup> Daughter of Louis XIV and Madame de Montespan.

Unusual interest was excited by the fact that women danced in this ballet for the first time instead of being represented by male dancers. The innovation had already found favour at Court, where ladies of quality delighted to dance in these performances.<sup>1</sup>

As for *Psyché*, the King was never weary of the music of this (almost) opera. A curious instance of the taste of the period: His Majesty ordered some of the airs to be performed at Dunkirk when the city ramparts were completed. Besides stringed instruments the orchestra was augmented by pipes, hautbois, military trumpets and 700 drums; further, a salute of 80 cannons precisely on the final chord. The effect on the audience was one of "joy mingled with terror."

Lully now took an extraordinarily bold step, begging the King to give him a post of Royal secretary (*charge de secrétaire*) a post usually reserved for noblemen. His request was promptly granted, greatly to the disgust of the other high officials, who snubbed the musician, but were obliged to receive him in their ranks.

His only recommendation was that he made people laugh, said Louvois contemptuously. To which Lully retorted, "You would be glad enough to do the same, if you could!" There were only two men in the kingdom, M. le Maréchal de la

<sup>1</sup> Members of the nobility were even permitted to sing and dance in Opera without prejudice to "their titles of nobility, privileges, rights and immunities."

Feuillade and Lully, who dared to reply to M. de Louvois so insolently, says Viéville.

On the day of his reception in the "Chancellerie" (Seal Office) Lully, with his accustomed love of display, gave a splendid banquet to the most important of his new colleagues and further invited all the "Chancellerie en corps" to a grand performance at the Opera. History does not say how these gentlemen enjoyed the performance, but records that they sat through it, two or three rows of serious gentlemen in black cloaks and large felt hats, listening with becoming gravity to the Minuets and Gavottes of "their Colleague, the Musician." (December 29th 1681).

*Persée* (by Quinault) was performed in Paris (17th April 1682) and repeated at Versailles in July of the same year. Here it was performed in the Riding School, again hastily transformed in a few hours into a theatre, a grassy lawn for carpet. The King considered it very fine, saying that the music was beautiful throughout, he had never heard an opera in which the music kept uniformly at so high a level.

*Persée* was undeniably a glorification of His Majesty's exploits. But everywhere it scored triumphant success and at a gratuitous performance, which Lully gave to celebrate the birth of the Duc de Bourgogne, crowds flocked through a triumphal arch at the entrance, whilst wine flowed from a public fountain until midnight. *Persée* remained a favourite opera, being still on the ré-

pertoire as late as 1746. It was an opera which made great demands on scenic machinery. Efforts at flying machines succeeded fairly well after several experiments had been made, and "vols" were successfully carried out.

An opera by Lully was always an event. The Rue St. Honoré was lined with carriages at each performance, and poorer citizens made an effort to procure seats. La Fontaine wrote:—

" Il a l'or de l'abbé, du brave, du commis,  
La coquette s'y fait mener par ses amis,  
L'officier, le marchand tout son rôti retransche  
Pour y pouvoir porter tout son gain le Dimanche."

and

" Le français pour lui seul contraignant sa nature  
N'a que pour l'opéra de passion qui dure."<sup>1</sup>

Some part of this passion for Opera was due to the popular delight in the dramatic action of the plot and in magnificent scenic effects, which surpassed anything hitherto put upon the stage. The spectators were open-eyed as well as open-eared, naïve crowds who with childish delight absorbed the wonderful stories of mythological heroes, the novel stage devices, as well as Lully's music. Viéville relates "When Armide prepares to stab Renaud, I have twenty times seen all the spectators hold their breath from fear, motionless, their souls all

1 "He has gold from the Abbé, the Soldier the Clerk, the Coquette persuades her admirers to take her, the officer and the merchant economise on their dinner in order to go to the Opera on Sunday. The Frenchman, contrary to his nature, remains faithful—to opera alone." (Roughly translated).

eyes and ears until the violin air which finishes the scene relaxed the tension, permitting them to breathe again, breathe with a murmur of joy and admiration." It was the same at Court. What wonder, when even the intellectual Madame de Sévigné wept over the sorrows of Alceste or Roland! Lully interprets his age, the "Grand Siècle" which loved heroic sentiment, gallantry, magnificent display, voluptuous imagery. His own nature revelled in these things, for he was a true child of his age, fortunately born in his right century. His own house was full of *objets de luxe*: pictures, mirrors, plate, diamonds; he was rich and loved to spend lavishly, extravagantly, living in the "grand" manner, a prince among artists. Such was Lully, the man of his age.

*Phæton*, again by Quinault (as were also the next three operas) was another "succès fou" both at Versailles (6th Jan. 1683) and in Paris (23rd April, the same year). The subject required magnificent and difficult staging and all Paris flocked to see it, but also to hear the music. It was known as the "People's Opera," and some of the airs were sung in the streets. Unfortunately, a brilliant run was cut short by the death of the Queen, which was announced one evening just as the Overture was beginning.

*Amadis* (18th Jan. 1684) contains the beautiful "Bois épais," whose beauty is still recognised. It is interesting to know that Lully himself was fond of this work.

*Roland* was a subject suggested by the King, one which did not appeal to the public. The music, however, became extremely popular and airs from it, notably the "rages de Roland," were sung everywhere. As the Court was still in mourning, only selections from the Opera were performed at Versailles (18th Jan. 1685), but it was fully staged at Paris in the following March. Lully considered this his best music. Roland was the warrior who, finding his love has deserted him for a rival, tears up trees and hurls down rocks in a mad rage, until a gentle spirit, Logistille, soothes him and persuades him to return to war and its glories.

*Armide*, written during a severe illness, performed in Paris, 15th Feb. 1686, was again a real success with the public. The Grand Dauphin, who adored Lully's music, came to Paris on purpose to hear *Armide*. But the presence of the King was lacking to complete the triumph. Lully was deeply hurt and expressed his disappointment quite pathetically in the Dedication published with *Armide* in the same year.

"Sire, of all the tragedies I have set to music, this is the one which has pleased the public most. Crowds flock to see it and never has a work been more applauded. Yet I esteem it the least happy of my compositions, since it has not enjoyed the privilege of appearing before your Majesty. At your command, Sire, I worked with care and zeal in spite of a sudden and dangerous attack of illness, and the ardent wish to complete it during the

period desired by your Majesty rendered me oblivious to the dangers of illness and the pains I suffered. But of what use, Sire, such efforts at haste in offering you these new strains? Your Majesty was not able to hear them (*sa majesté ne s'est pas trouvée en état*) and only took pleasure in my music as it served to please your subjects."

But *Armide* was the greatest success since *Bel-lérophon*. People wept at emotional passages and declared Act V. to be Lully's greatest work. This was Quinault's<sup>1</sup> last libretto; he wrote a poetic farewell to opera, and to his "muse tendre," as if presaging the end of his work, and courted a more austere muse with a poem on "L'extinction de l'Hèrèsie."

A last "pastorale herôïque" (words by Campistron) was written at royal command for the visit of the Grand Dauphin to the Castle of Anet. This was *Acis et Galathée*, a charmingly fresh and original work, which remained on the operatic répertoire for nearly 100 years (until 1782).

For its first performance (6th Sept. 1682) Lully went to Anet with his singers, dancers and musicians, and was treated during his stay there with the greatest respect, being served at table exactly like other noble guests; in fact, a special maître d'hôtel was appointed to attend to his wants. "There was always good company gathered round his table," says the *Mercure*, "either to eat or to talk with M. de Lully during the repast, for his

<sup>1</sup> He survived Lully only one year, dying 26th November 1688.



conversation is no less entertaining than his music."

Another big popular success was scored when this *Pastorale* was produced at the Palais Royal three weeks later (Sept. 1686).

Lully's triumphant career might have run on for many years longer had not death cut it short when he was still in the prime of life, busy as ever and full of new projects after his recovery from the recent illness. He was at work on a new opera, *Achille et Polixène* (with Campistron as librettist), but the first act was still unfinished when the King fell dangerously ill. France was full of rejoicings at his recovery towards the end of the year. Lully manifested his joy by a *Te Deum* which was sung at his own expense (8th Jan. 1687) at the Feuillants in the Rue st. Honoré. More than 150 singers and musicians took part in it and "in order to show his zeal," says the chronicler, Lully conducted himself. But in his enthusiasm he injured his foot by striking it sharply with the *bâton*. A small swelling appeared, which spread rapidly; blood poisoning supervened.

Lully would not agree to the amputation suggested by his doctor. A quack was called in who made matters worse. A characteristic story is told of how Lully was persuaded by a priest to burn the score of the opera on which he was busy, (*Achille et Polyxène*). Afterwards, feeling better, he received some friends, among them a young



prince who reproached him for having destroyed such music.

"How foolish, Baptiste, to believe a dreaming Jansenist and burn such beautiful music!"

"Peace, peace, Monseigneur!" whispered the dying man, "I have another copy."

But in spite of his gay humour, when he felt death really approaching, Lully energetically and dramatically repented of his sins in ashes and with a cord round his neck "*avec une édification parfaite.*"

With businesslike interest in this world and the next he sent for the notary on March 10th and gave exact orders about his funeral, ordering a perpetual mass for the repose of his soul and many other things. His operatic rights he bequeathed to his wife and his son, Jean Louis, jointly, and willed his wife also to have the direction of the Académie Royale de Musique, assisted by a friend and a secretary. Twelve days later, March 22nd, Lully died at Ville l'Évesque in his large canopied bed, and was interred with due pomp and ceremony at the church of Les Augustins Petits Pères, after a service at the Madeleine. His family erected a sumptuous monument to his memory in the chapel of his patron saint, St. Jean Baptiste, a monument in black and white marble by Michel Cotton: two female figures representing light and dramatic music and above these the characteristic bust of Lully by Antoine Coysevox. His enemies expressed disgust at such

display, but there were friends, we read, who wept sincerely the loss of "Baptiste."

A more modest tribute to Baptiste's popularity was a verse sung to the air of the *Rigaudon* in *Acis et Galatée*:

"Baptiste est mort,  
Adieu la Symphonie;  
La musique est finie,  
Déplorons son sort."<sup>1</sup>

"A very ugly little man," he is described, "and extremely careless in his dress. One scarcely saw his small red-lidded eyes, and they, too, scarcely saw anything, but their sombre fire, expressed great intelligence and a great deal of mischief (malice); his whole face was in fact grotesque, bizarre." Other writers note his large nose, large mouth, thick sensual lips, a face full of lines, bushy eyebrows, and extremely short-sighted eyes. He wore a thick wig, not over clean, and was always covered with snuff. He composed at his harpsichord, snuff-box at one end of the instrument, whose notes, stained and dirty, bore witness to his inveterate use of the same.

Lully was probably never very strong physically, in spite of his extraordinary energy and will power, and his excesses in living, no less than incessant hard work, undermined his constitution. Although

<sup>1</sup> "Baptiste is dead,  
Farewell to Symphony,  
Music is at an end;  
Let us weep her fate,"

dissipated and fond of riotous living, he was on the whole a good husband and father—"at any rate not a bad one," says Lecerf, dispassionately. He found a congenial soul in Mademoiselle Certin, a celebrated Claveciniste, who delighted the Court as well as all Paris by her concerts. She had many admirers; even La Fontaine wrote verses in her honour.

Of Lully's children, three had a share of musical talent, but not one inherited their father's genius. Perhaps he had hopes of one son especially, for he gave him a good musical education, but there was no real gift. The two sons, Jean and Jean Louis, were evidently not equal to the task of completing Lully's unfinished ballet, "*Les Saisons*," which was done by Colasse, only the ballets in it being by Lully. His eldest son, Louis, was a great disappointment, weak in mind and character to such a degree that he had to be placed under restraint with the monks at Charenton.

Lully was generous to his children, giving his daughter, Catherine Madeleine, a handsome dowry when she married Nicolas de Francini, Maître d'Hotel du Roi. To this son-in-law he gave up most of his own duties at the opera, only retaining the artistic direction himself. He made his sons liberal allowances, and in his will he remembered all who had served him. Lully was not miserly, as his enemies declared; although he was fond of money, it was not to hoard, but to spend lavishly. He certainly amassed a very considerable fortune,

leaving 800,000 livres (francs), also about 44,000 francs' worth of plate and 35,000 frs. of diamonds.

His was a versatile genius. He could write verse, especially in comic vein, was never at a loss for repartee or joke, could tell a story in capital style, with an Italian dramatic touch which never forsook him. No wonder he was an amusing companion. Le Roi Soleil found Baptiste quite indispensable to his happiness. Foreign monarchs also smiled on Monsieur de Lully, gave him rich presents and honoured him with their portraits.

A career so amazingly, phenomenally fortunate as Lully's naturally excited envy. Enemies laid to his charge a terrible list of vices of all kinds. Undeniably he had many serious faults, was profligate, selfish, greedy of money and possessions, unscrupulous in his ambition, overbearing . . . . All these, and worse, defects became a legend encrusting his memory. Later generations, remembering the distorted vision of contemporaries, have learnt to discount many of these accusations. Whatever Lully's faults, he had friends at home as well as at Court. Incidents such as his remembrance of all his servants in his will show at least a kindly nature. Or he would seek to atone for an unusual outburst of bad temper at rehearsal by inviting the long-suffering musicians to supper.

Nor does it appear that he kept his position as Court favourite by flattery and servility; he had a caustic tongue for high and low alike. Once on being reproached for keeping the King waiting,

Lully said drily: "He is the Master, he can wait."

He gave the Court something precious, enlivening its costly boredom by his genius and wit, gave splendour of genius to wealth, besides being "bon camarade" to them all, musicians, princes and courtiers.

"Baptiste, fais-nous rire," implored the laughter-loving Parisians.

But Baptiste was not merely a laughter-provoking comedian. His *Bois épais*, for instance, is on quite different lines; its tender, solemn beauty is still felt.

A vital, original nature, one who makes the flame of life flicker more brightly, makes his fellows live more intensely, is always precious. And this was Lully. His flame of life burned always brightly, ardently; his genius illumined a King and his period.

Lully wrote easily, although he had to wait sometimes for inspiration. If it came in the night he would rise and go to his harpsichord to capture the idea at once. He would read a scene which he wished to interpret in music again and again until he had it by heart and, when inspiration finally came, would rush to his harpsichord, sing and play until he had both melody and harmony perfect. Three months' work at an opera generally sufficed; he then had the whole conception so firmly in his mind that he could dictate it to his secre-

tary. When composing he seemed literally possessed by music and at all times rhythms and melodies flowed at the merest suggestion, such as the trot of a horse, the step of a dance. If he took up a guitar, his fingers at once began to improvise courantes, minuets, gigue, most of which he never troubled to write down. Even if a violin, an instrument which he never really loved, was lying about, he would take it up and play for hours. In composing opera he often wrote several versions of a scene and, after choosing one, would tell his secretary carelessly to burn the others. His genius loved simple, clear, firm outlines, a graceful melodic line, made as expressive as possible with the simplest accompaniment. Quite early, as we have seen, his instinct led him to reject the over-elaborate music of the "violons du roi." He had, in fact, the instinct of the Modern of his age, the revolt against the stereotyped contrapuntal devices of the old school and the feeling for the concentrated, expressive, harmonic basis of the New.

He was extremely severe with his artists, insisting upon good rhythm, vigour and clearness of *attaque*, points in which his Palais Royal orchestra of forty executants excelled; his musicians were famous throughout Europe. He trained his singers to sing without dragging, especially in *recitative*, whilst he instructed both actors and singers in deportment; how to walk on and present themselves. In the ballet he invented what he called "pas d'expression," expressive steps, and was able to illus-

trate by his own performance what he wished. His music contains minute directions as to expression, e.g., "Very softly, almost without touching the strings," etc.

Artists, singers, dancers and instrumentalists all obeyed this energetic, despotic *maestro*, so all powerful as well as so exacting, who ruled them with a rod of iron and Viéville, recalling his régime, says regretfully: "I warrant that under Lully's sway the lady singers would not have colds half the year, nor would the gentlemen be drunk four times a week." For alas! no sooner was the great man dead than the musical edifice he had erected so carefully began to crumble away. Ten years later the instrumentalists were considered "poor," the singers shrieked, the orchestra played out of time and tune, and everyone lamented the loss of Baptiste.

But his compositions, his operas held their own for more than a century. Later generations declared that music had only begun with Lully, before him it had been "gothique," barbarous and crude. His *Armide* was pronounced the finest work the world had seen since Nero's day! French 17th century music was in fact represented by Lully, the Italian who so completely identified himself with France.

Not only in Paris and the provinces was Lully a cult; beyond French frontiers his works were acclaimed, in Italy, Holland, Flanders, in the chief northern courts. *Armide* was performed in Rome



in 1690. His influence was felt by musicians in Italy, Germany, England, from the Italian Teobaldi di Gatti to Fischer and even Bach. Purcell learnt much from Humphrey, a pupil of Lully, and Haendel also adopted some of the French master's methods.

And when Rameau came, he found a terrible rival in his great predecessor, still supremely in possession of the field, as he had been in his brilliant lifetime. Lully had become a musical dogma, and he, who in his lifetime had sought new channels, had become in his turn an obstacle for others. He was a Classic and a Classic of extraordinary tenacity. Even Gluck had to fight the tradition which had become a national obsession. For so long every new composer had copied Lully. They had written tempests, "bruits de guerre," rages, "sommeils" in his style and imitated his *recitative* slavishly. Even Gluck, in his first works, copied Lully.

And not only did musicians admit his superiority, his music was popular with ordinary folk. No artist was ever more universally admired, both during his lifetime and afterwards. Viéville declares that the air, "Amour, que veux-tu de moi" (*Amadis*) was sung by every cook in France and Lully would stop his carriage on the Pont Neuf to set some poor fiddler right who was playing one of his airs. The severely hostile Arnould deplored (in 1694) that "the poison of songs by Quinault and Lulli had spread all through France."



Lully's opera, like Versailles, was very artificial. Under him it became stereotyped and fixed, so that no innovations could be attempted. The form had crystallised and could not be changed without breaking.

There was the Overture, a slow movement, dignified and heavy, then a fugue followed by another short, slow passage. Then the Prologue with chorus, singing, dances, recitative, dealing with mythological and allegorical subjects. The Overture is repeated after this. The drama proper following all this is a long, loosely woven plot on which are strung dances, especially rustic dances, scenes with chorus. Such descriptive passages as "Slumbers," "Furies," "Storms," "Battles," were all modelled on the same patterns, a stereotyped form of descriptive art.

The subjects of Lully's operas were, moreover, not spontaneous but greatly revised works of art. Often the King chose or suggested the subject. Quinault (or another librettist) would put it into shape, entirely under Lully's direction however. Finally it was submitted to the Académie Française, so that the Opera was really in some sense National Opera. His Majesty followed the composition of the music with equal interest, scene by scene, had the airs sung to him, attended rehearsals (which were at Versailles or St. Germain), and gave his advice. In the same way he would order of Lalande, a court musician who wrote chiefly religious music, a number of "little pieces" and

would insist on hearing these at all stages of their evolution.<sup>1</sup>

Lully's chief form of composition was of course opera, but he composed religious music, too, especially in later years, when the King's thoughts turned to piety under the influence of Madame de Maintenon and advancing years. And in his religious music Lully showed sincere religious feeling. He had moments of mystic exaltation in spite of his worldliness. He drew a sharp distinction between secular and religious music and was scandalised one day at church on hearing music adapted from one of his operas used at Mass. There was a story that he prayed aloud: "O Lord, forgive this error, I did not intend this music for Thee."

His *Miserere* (written about 1664) on the text of the Psalm is beautiful and impressive. In it he employed Perpendicular Harmony, obtaining massive effects, and heightening the expression by bold modulations. The voices, alone or combined, are generally only supported by *basso continuo*, but in

<sup>1</sup> Louis XIV lived in music, or, at any rate, his life had a constant musical accompaniment. He had music at table, at church, when playing cards, walking, hunting, in the country or in town. In his private apartments of an evening he would hear acts of operas or "petits concerts," at which he sometimes sang himself. If an air took his fancy, he would hum or sing it incessantly, sometimes, Mme. de Maintenon complained, "when the words were not at all suitable." Not only the Court and the City, the whole kingdom was fond of music. Lully's airs were sung by high and low, played at street corners and on the Pont Neuf. Opera was performed at Lyons, Marseilles, Montpellier by travelling companies, and there were several provincial Opera Houses.

the grand chorus violins double the vocal part (a usual device at that period). To quote M. de la Laurencie, in the *Finale*, "Lully expresses all the religious emotion of the text, all its fear and hope. Sorrowfully the alto sings 'Amplius lava me,' a fervent prayer in which the sinner's despair is felt. At the words, 'Et in peccatis concepit me,' a series of 7ths on a diatonically descending bass seem to retreat in shame. The full chorus, although massive and heavy, retains its polyphonic suppleness; this is perceptible in the restless movement of the ten parts in 'Docebo iniquos,' in which heavy masses of voices are hurled from all sides, crashing on the word 'impii.'"

It is difficult for us at this distance of time to distinguish the exact shades of difference between Lully's style of music and that of his contemporaries, but in his day those differences were recognised. Music was changing from the Polyphonic to the Harmonic system. The former still flourished in organ music, but there was no vigorous young school of moderns to take its place. But Lully, when quite a youth, instinctively rejected the old elaborate contrapuntal devices and always used them sparingly. He always disliked over-elaboration and his "*Surtout pas de broderies*" was constantly directed against singers and instrumentalists who were fond of introducing "ornaments." He wrote with greater simplicity, with more distinct rhythm and melodic line than his contemporaries. To quote M. Henri Prunières, Lully

“put a stop to the wearisome loquacity of composers afflicted with chronic fugue and a bad habit of talking incessantly when they had nothing to say. He allowed a musical idea to free itself from traditional forms and express itself more naturally. Such a revolution was not entirely the work of one man, it is true, but Lully had a large share in it; he was so greatly admired that other musicians followed his example and imitated his methods.”

In his operas Lully employed very simple harmonies, only occasionally a 7th or 9th by way of relief. Musical critics of his day admired his clever use of discords, sometimes, however, reproving him for not resolving them properly. It is amusing to find critics of that day anticipating, in this respect, critics of Wagner; the discord has always been an object of solicitude.

The orchestra of the period was small and its effects were not varied by judicious blending of different instruments. Lully has duos of flutes, trios of oboes, airs for violins, occasionally an *ensemble* of wood-wind, brass and strings, contrasting with other instruments, but he makes no experiments in blending different timbres. There were conventions with regard to the use of instruments. Flutes were proper for “effets nocturnes et élégiaques,” for tender laments, also as heralds of approaching amorous divinities, as a kind of *leit motiv* in fact. Rustic songs and dances demanded the oboe. Trumpets of course sounded “War Alarms” and Marches. Violins accom-

panied "Slumbers" and also (in rapid movement) storms and fateful presentiments. A harpsichord and two bass lutes accompanied *recitative*. On rare occasions Lully employed the guitar, tambourine, castanets.

Grove says that "Lully's instrumentation, though laboured, is poor, and his harmony not always correct. A great sameness of treatment disfigures his operas, and the same rhythm and the same counterpoint serve to illustrate the rage of Roland and the rocking of Charon's boat." He made some innovations in the orchestra, especially in his greater use of wind and percussion instruments. And he was the first to introduce women dancers on the stage, abolishing the inartistic custom of male dancers dressed as women.

In Opera Lully attached great importance to *recitative*, declaring that it was more natural (as an expression of emotion) than melodic airs. His operas were really founded upon *recitative* and his principle "la vérité dans la déclamation," followed by Rameau and Gluck, foreshadowed Berlioz and Wagner. There is an anecdote of Mlle. Lecouvreur who recited Lully's "Enfin il est dans ma puissance" and was astonished to find how faithfully the music rendered the emotion of the situation.

## WORKS BY LULLY

*Ballets.*

- 1658. Alcidiane.
- 1659. La Raillerie.
- 1660. Xerxès.
- 1661. L'Impatience.
  - Les Saisons.
- 1662. Hercule Amoureux.
- 1663. Les Arts.
  - Les Noces de Village.
- 1664. Les Amours déguisés.
  - Entr'actes d'Œdipe (Corneille).
- 1665. Naissance de Vénus.
  - Les Gardes.
- 1666. Triomphe de Bacchus (Ballet de Créquy).
  - Ballet des Muses.
- 1668. Le Carnaval.
- 1669. Flore.
- 1671. Ballet des Ballets.
- 1681. Triomphe de l'Amour.
- 1685. Temple de la Paix.

*Comédies-Ballets et Pastorales*

- 1664. Le Mariage forcé.
  - Plaisirs de l'Île enchantée.
- 1665. Amour médecin.
- 1667. Pastorale comique.
  - Le Sicilien.

1668. Festes de Versailles et intermèdes de  
       Georges Dandin.  
 — Grotte de Versailles.  
 1669. Monsieur de Pourceaugnac.  
 1670. Amants magnifiques.  
 — Bourgeois gentilhomme et Ballet des Na-  
       tions.  
 1671. Psyché.  
 1685. Idylle de la Paix (Racine).

### *Operas*

1672. Fêtes de l'Amour et de Bacchus (pastorale). (Several authors).  
 1673. Cadmus et Hermione. (Quinault).  
 1675. Thésée. (do.).  
 — Le Carnaval (Several authors).  
       (mascarade).  
 1676. Atys. (Quinault).  
 — Alceste. (do.).  
 1677. Isis. (do.).  
 1678. Psyché. (Thomas Corneille  
                   & Fontenelle).  
 1679. Bellérophon. (do.).  
 1680. Proserpine. (Quinault).  
 1681. Triomphe de l'Amour (Quinault &  
       (ballet). Benserade).  
 1682. Persée. (Quinault).  
 1683. Phaéton. (do.).  
 1684. Amadis. (do.).  
 1685. Roland. (do.).

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|-------|--|---------------|
| 1686. | Armide.                                    | (do.).        |
| —     | Acis et Galathée<br>(pastorale).           | (Campistron). |
| 1687. | Achille et Polixène<br>(1st act by Lully). | (Campistron). |

*Motets for two choirs*

Miserere 1664.

Plaudo laetare 1668.

Te Deum 1677.

De Profundis 1683.

Dies irae.

Benedictus.

(17 Motets in MS.).

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## CHAPTER II

JEAN PHILIPPE RAMEAU

1683-1764



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THREE years before Lully's death was born one destined to be his great though posthumous rival, one who had to fight, not Lully, but the Lully tradition which still held sway fifty years after the master's death.

Rameau was the contemporary of J. S. Bach, whom he outlived by fourteen years. Dijon was the town in which he was born and grew up; a town which at that time was quite a centre of music. A certain amateur, M. de Malteste, for instance, used to arrange concerts once a week, which attracted ladies of quality, music-loving officers, amateurs and professionals, all eager to listen or take part. Rameau's father was organist of a church, but he had only developed his music late in life, remaining simply an amateur until his thirtieth year, when an organist, struck by his unusual talent, gave him lessons in various branches of the art.

Jean Philippe was born 5th September 1683,

and was baptised on the same day in the church of which his father was organist. His mother claimed aristocratic relations, but nothing is known of them. The Rameaus must have been poor, for in the city archives it is recorded that they twice appealed for exemption from taxation.

The baby Jean Philippe had however two noble sponsors at his baptism: the Chevalier Jean Baptiste Lantin, Sieur de Montagny and the Demoiselle Anne Philippe Valon, daughter of the Chevalier Richard Valon (whether the condescension of these godparents was due to friendship for the Rameau family or to their esteem for music does not appear). The godfather had set to music no less than thirty of the *Odes* of Horace and the *Atys* of Catullus, further, he had written a treatise on the Music of the Ancients.

Thus Jean Philippe was born in an atmosphere of music.

Jean Rameau *père* was determined that his children should not suffer as he had done for lack of early instruction. So anxious was he not to lose time that he began to teach them before they were able to read, and as soon as poor little Jean Philippe's fingers were capable of action, they were exercised on the spinet. The father was a severe teacher with a strict system of rewards and punishments, which seems to have answered well enough in the case of the three musical children of the family.

By the time he was seven, in spite of his father's

dry and repressive methods, Jean Philippe could play all kinds of music at sight on the harpsichord. His brother Claude afterwards became an organist of repute and a sister, Catherine Rameau, made a name as Claveciniste. When quite an old lady she was still giving lessons in her native town. These were the musical ones.

Of the two brothers, Claude, more brilliant as a performer, was evidently destined for a musical career but the father, less hopeful of Jean Philippe, decided that he should study law, first sending him to a Jesuit College for general education. But Jean Philippe proved an unruly scholar; he was always singing noisily or scribbling music in class instead of learning his lessons and finally had to leave with a very incomplete education. He had indeed acquired some Latin, but French was neglected by the Jesuits, and as a youth Rameau wrote and spelt his own language disgracefully. His first love-letters, it is said, were so ill-spelt that the lady twitted him with his ignorance; whereupon, with characteristic energy, he set himself to study French and so far improved as to write it correctly, but never well.

At College secular music was performed on festival days, usually in the form of operas in the Italian style. The conflict between French and Italian music was then raging and the Jesuits favoured the Italian. Even in Rameau's childhood the M. de Malteste above-mentioned had brought over the latest operas from Venice to be performed

at his concerts, a matter of no small expense and a proof of the great interest taken in music at that period.

We know not how or why, but Rameau at eighteen made a journey to Italy; then as now the magnet of artists. One would expect the ardent young student to absorb new ideas eagerly, but this was by no means the case. Was it from temperament or from too strict an education on the old lines? Certain it is that, having reached Milan, Rameau disapproved of the music there and was not even sufficiently interested to go on to Venice, then the centre of the new operatic school. After a sojourn of only a few months he retraced his steps to France (literally his steps in those days of pedestrian travelling). In after life he bitterly regretted this unaccountable lack of interest, realising what he might have learnt in Italy; no doubt it would have enlarged his outlook and developed his genius on more modern lines.

On this journey Rameau, after the manner of poor scholars, paid his way by his art, playing sometimes the violin in a band of travelling musicians, sometimes the organ in a church. For some reason he did not return to his native town, but took a post as organist at Avignon for four months and afterwards one at Clermont in Auvergne. Here he remained for six years and in the quiet town he composed his first works: some *Pièces de Clavecin* and three Cantatas (*Médée*, *L'Absence*, *L'Impatience*).

The Cantata of that day was a musical form newly imported from Italy, really a small opera or operetta to be sung in a drawing-room. In and about Clermont the novelty met with some success.

Rameau in his youth seems to have been full of restless energy; he grew weary of the restricted monotony of a provincial town. Two years before the end of his engagement he broke his contract with the Chapter, absolutely refusing to stay longer, and betook himself to Paris. Here he found a lodging with a wigmaker in the Rue du Temple opposite the church of the Cordeliers, tradition says in order to be near the celebrated organist of that church, Louis Marchand. He became Marchand's pupil and, he says, learnt much from him both in organ playing and composition. Rameau himself obtained two posts as organist, but both were wretchedly paid, and he eked out a living by teaching. With the exception of his first *Pièces de Clavecin*, published 1706, he composed nothing at this time but devoted himself to study.

Paris, at any rate, offered the best masters, and in addition to lessons from Marchand he studied Harmony, as it was then understood, under one Lacroit. He learnt the Rule of the Octave, which taught a chord for each note of the scale, but gave no explanation of inversions, considering them as separate and independent chords. Already Rameau was not satisfied with the usual theories, was already seeking some basis for a better system of harmony. Dimly he presaged some elusive secret



which would solve the contradictions apparent in the approved system.

For some unknown reason he returned to the provinces, visiting Dijon in 1716, possibly in connection with the death of his father, and was present at the marriage of his brother Claude (tradition has it to a lady with whom Jean Philippe himself was in love). He refused more than one post as organist in his native town but accepted one in his old church in Clermont. The great Massillon was preaching in Clermont at that time and thus, to the greater glory of the Cathedral, Massillon preached and Rameau played. Evidently Clermont was proud of its organist and Rameau's chair, in which he rested between whiles, is still preserved.

It was again an up-hill struggle when he returned to Paris in 1723, this time for good. At the age of forty, Rameau was still unknown. He had composed nothing of importance in the provinces, but he brought with him a work on Harmony, which excited much interest. A smaller work, *Nouveau Système de musique théorique* (1726), roused lively discussion. Pupils came to the author of the book and were for a time his only source of income, for in spite of his growing reputation, Rameau was passed over in favour of Daquin, on applying for a post as organist.<sup>1</sup> But

<sup>1</sup> In Paris the position of organist was really a good one at that time. An organist of repute like Marchand would undertake several churches, playing himself only on great occasions and

in spite of this, his means allowed him to marry (25 February 1726) Marie Louise Mangeot, daughter of a Court musician. The young bride (a girl of nineteen) had decided musical talent, a pretty voice, and sang charmingly, so well, in fact, that in 1734 she sang before the Queen in her husband's opera *Hippolyte et Aricie*. Had she possessed no fortune at all, it is said, she might have made one as an artist. She was, besides, a gentle, affectionate creature who made Rameau an excellent wife in spite of the disparity in their ages. Rameau was forty-three at the date of his marriage. His second *Pièces de Clavecin* had appeared in 1724, also another treatise on the *Basse Fondamentale et les doigts*. There are quaint instructions in this as regards fingering. The left hand is only to play one note at a time, the right hand may take chords. The right thumb is only to be used when absolutely necessary, *i.e.*, if the hand cannot reach certain notes without it. This was, of course, the universal rule until Bach discovered that the use of the thumb was quite practical. Rameau further directs that the forefinger shall play the lowest note of chords, the little finger the top note, the third or fourth the middle notes, chords to be in *arpeggio*.

festivals; on ordinary days he would send his pupils as substitutes. Pupils were a great source of income, and Marchand, who was the fashionable organist, made ten louis a day by lessons, a large sum in those days. There is an idea that Marchand at first was proud of Rameau, but afterwards grew jealous of his pupil's genius, and it was owing to him that Rameau was passed over in favour of Daquin.

Opera was really the only road to fame for a musician and Rameau's thoughts turned longingly towards it. But he was unknown, poor, without friends or influence. He began humbly enough by writing music for a Fair held at St. Germain and composed some numbers for a "Féerie burlesque" (1723). There was an Exhibition of Caraïbes (natives of the Carribean Islands) at the Théâtre Italien, and Rameau produced some incidental music for this spectacle, one piece of which has been preserved as "Air des Sauvages" (afterwards included in "*Les Indes Galantes*," 1735.<sup>1</sup>)

The tide of affairs only really began to turn after 1727, when Rameau was discovered by a patron of the arts, one Monsieur Riche de la Pouplinière, a wealthy man (fermier général), a friend of Voltaire and generously disposed towards talent of all kinds. At his house one met every one of note, artists, literary men, princes, ambassadors. This "protecteur" generously placed his organ and his private orchestra at Rameau's disposal; the musician and his wife were constant guests at his house. The fact that M. de la Pouplinière's wife was a certain Mimi Dancourt, a pupil of Rameau's, may have led to this friendship. The lady was certainly interested in music; she afterwards wrote, under the title *Notes sur la Génération Harmonique*, a criticism of her master's theories.

In this house Rameau found the appreciation he

<sup>1</sup> It had already been transcribed for harpsichord in a *Nouvelle suite de Pièces de Clavecin*.

had lacked so long, and met men of note, foremost among them, Voltaire. At last he was amongst friends who recognised his genius. The Abbé Pellegrin (known as the "Curé de l'Opéra," whose libretto *Jephthé* had been set to music by Montéclair) was induced to write a libretto for Rameau's first opera, *Hippolyte et Aricie*. It is said that he made the composer sign an agreement, but tore it up after the first rehearsal, which took place at La Pouplinière's house, so great was his enthusiasm for the music. *Hippolyte et Aricie* was finally performed at the Opera House, 1 Oct. 1733, the composer being already fifty years of age. During the next twenty-one years, however, he composed twenty-one operas, as if to make up for lost time.

The Opera was immediately attacked by Lully-worshippers, a sure sign that the work was original and interesting. The composer was too "Italian," he used strange chords, his music was unnecessarily difficult. The *Mercure*, however, declared the music "mâle et harmonieuse," and one musician, Campra, recognised Rameau's genius, for, said he, the score contained sufficient material for ten operas "such as the rest of us write . . . this man will eclipse us all."

Yet in spite of friendly support the opera was not really a success. Rameau was disappointed, but, always stoical in his failures, he said simply, "I was mistaken. I thought my taste would be successful; I have no other. I shall compose no more."

Fortunately he soon recovered sufficiently to make another venture in the form known as *Opéra ballet*, and in 1735 produced *Les Indes Galantes* above referred to.

*Castor et Pollux* followed in 1737 with the advantage of a more logical libretto, and with this Rameau's fame was established. He was acclaimed as France's greatest composer. Crowds flocked to see this opera, the receipts on the very last night amounting to 4,500 livres.

But there was still much hostile criticism. In fact, at every step throughout his life Rameau was destined to find hostile critics, detractors, enemies. At this time it was the still devoted Lullystes to whom Rameau represented the daring innovator, the rebel against the Lully tradition. They nicknamed his followers " Ramoneurs " and carried on a wordy warfare. Rameau's music was, first and foremost, too difficult of execution, his " prodigieuse mécanique " was impossible, his *recitatives* were not to the popular taste. Voltaire observed that the Lullystes were horrified at the amount of semiquavers in Rameau's music.<sup>1</sup> As for Rameau himself, he protested just as Lully had done before him, that he only aimed at making his art as natural as possible, at taking Nature for his model, which perhaps meant that he tried to depict emotion as naturally as possible. He certainly theorised about

1 " You cannot think how alarming it is to see 32 notes in one single bar " (Viéville).

it. However that may be, 1737 saw the publication of another book of theory, *La Génération Harmonique*, and Rameau started a school of composition in his own house. Evidently he was now winning his way to fame in spite of hostile critics, and in spite, too, of his own proud, reserved, even repellent nature, which by no means made for popularity. And another ballet, *Festes d'Hébé ou les talents lyriques*, dedicated to the Duchesse du Maine and performed 1739, set the seal on Rameau's success as a composer. (In this is found the pretty Tambourin in E minor, which still charms musicians). His genius was now acknowledged. Duly the adversaries deplored the "coquetterie et volupté" of this latest work.

In November of the next year Paris was greatly excited over the performance of *Dardanus*. Boxes were sold out a week beforehand. Everywhere in cafés and drawing-rooms discussion raged between Lullystes and Ramoneurs. But finally the evening of November 19th 1740 was a veritable triumph for Rameau. In vain the Lullystes raged against his music as difficult, obscure, "cabalistique," as a medley with echoes of Pont Neuf airs. In vain they complained that for three long hours the hard-worked orchestra had not even time to sneeze! Perennial complaint of the Old against the New, of the Accustomed against every original idea, every improvement in means of expression! It takes a whole generation, Voltaire remarked, for the human ear to grow familiar with a new musical style.

An English nobleman in Paris at that time notes that although everyone was abusing Rameau's 'horrible' work, yet it was impossible to get a seat at the opera.

A clever epigram of about this date voices the indignation of the Lullystes :

" Si le difficile est beau  
C'est un grand homme que Rameau,  
Mais si le beau par aventure  
N'était que la simple nature  
Quel petit homme que Rameau "1

In 1745, with Voltaire as librettist, Rameau composed *La Princesse de Navarre* to celebrate the marriage of the Dauphin with Marie Thérèse. This was performed at Versailles. The King paid all expenses of the performance and gave Rameau a yearly pension of 2,000 livres<sup>2</sup> with the title "Compositeur de la musique de la Chambre." After this success Rameau's style grew lighter, more elegant.

Then followed various smaller works and "Pièces d'Occasion."

*Platée* (1745), a kind of opera bouffe, was not a success, even the court did not care for it.

*Les Fêtes de l'Hymen et de l'Amour* (1747),

1 " If difficulty be a test  
Of beauty, great let Rameau be,  
But if perchance simplicity  
Be beauty, then how small is he." (Roughly translated).

2 A livre = about 1 franc



which celebrated the Dauphin's second marriage, written without inspiration, failed to inspire the public. *Naïs*, another "occasional" work, on the signature of the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle (1749), was also a failure.

Rameau at first had rebelled against the conventional operatic routine, but in reality he was no innovator and clung to the old classical subjects with spectacular display. Perhaps if in those youthful wanderings he had stayed longer in Italy, he might have absorbed the more modern ideas. But now it was too late. Rameau was, in fact, between two schools. The Lullystes persecuted him as an innovator, whilst the Moderns, who presently appeared on the scene, considered him the representative of the antiquated methods and abused him from quite a different point of view.

It is curious to find the Lullystes, who had attacked his *Castor et Pollux* on its first appearance, defending that same opera with the greatest obstinacy some forty years later against the partisans of Gluck, whose music they condemned as a foreign invasion, its followers afflicted with "étrangéromanie."

The music of *Zoroastre* (1749) was more inspired than some of these other lighter works. Unfortunately the gentlemen of the King's household, displeased because their usual free passes had been curtailed, did their best to make the piece a failure. There was plenty of discussion, but Rameau never



made large sums from his works. A verse of the time commented on the fact.

“ Rien pour l'auteur de la musique,  
Pour l'auteur du p<sup>o</sup>eme rien

Rameau doit aller à pied  
Les directeurs en carosse.”<sup>1</sup>

And now the New, a far more formidable rival than the Lullystes, came knocking at the door.

In 1752 a company of Italian artists arrived in Paris with a repertory of new light Italian operas. Pergolesi's *La Serva Padrona* took Parisians by storm with its freshness and vivacity, and the Encyclopædists acclaimed Italian music as the only true and spontaneous art. Rousseau attacked French music (1753) with his eternal refrain of “Return to Nature.” Grimm, “the German disguised as a Parisian,” followed with virulent attacks on French Opera, French *esprit*, and special attacks on Rameau as representative of French music. Especially Rousseau pursued Rameau implacably, continuing his diatribes even after the composer's death. Rameau, impatient, proud, intolerant, replied to these attacks; the wordy war waxed furious on both sides. The old conflict of Lullystes *versus* Ramoneurs paled before this *Guerre des Bouffons*, so called from the “Bouffon” Manelli, chief singer of the Italian *troupe*. The charm of these light operas lay in the unconventionality of their sub-

<sup>1</sup> “Nothing for the composer, nor for the poet, Rameau must trudge on foot, the directors ride in their carriage.”

jects, taken from scenes and persons in ordinary life, humorously treated. They came as a delightful relief after the stilted classical heroes and heroines, the threadbare episodes of gods and goddesses, the Greek and Roman warriors in tunics, with ribbons and helmets on powdered wigs, in short, all the artificial conventions of which people had at last grown unutterably weary.

All Paris joined in these heated discussions. Even the Court took sides. The King, inspired by Madame de Pompadour, was for French music whilst the Queen preferred Italian, and at the Opera partisans gathered near the royal boxes, standing by the "Coin du Roi" or the "Coin de la Reine," according to their opinions.

Leaflets were distributed from their respective corners. The Italian party was on the whole more vivacious and enthusiastic than the French, Rousseau says, and probably this was the case, as partisans of the New against the Old are usually the more youthful and vigorous element.

The Encyclopædists were interested in every branch of science and dabbled in the problems of music. D'Alembert at first wrote in support of Rameau's theories, even collaborating with him (greatly to the advantage of Rameau's literary style, which was so poor as to be a serious drawback to his arguments). But presently D'Alembert joined Grimm, Holbach, Rousseau, and all with one accord began to attack French music and Rameau as its representative. They condemned,

of course, the artificial conventions which had so long ruled the French operatic stage, the classic mythological subjects, the stilted *libretti*, the monotonous ballets. The opera had become a mere vehicle for spectacular display and dancing, and people at this time were vaguely longing for "Nature."

The Encyclopædists, the Moderns of their days, were unsparing critics of everything connected with the old style, they condemned French *recitative* as monotonous and dragging, French airs as insipid and dull. Above all they wanted real human interest instead of ballets with Apollo or Hercules as figure-heads. In their zeal they declared duets "unnatural," whilst Rousseau condemned fugues as "the remains of the Gothic spirit" (*esprit gothique*), and clamoured for the supremacy of vocal art and simple accompaniments to song. Harmony, he declared, was only physical and mechanical in its effects, Melody was all-important. D'Alembert particularly disliked Sonatas as being mere intellectual exercises. "Sonate, que me veux-tu?" the saying of Fontenelle, was frequently quoted. Undoubtedly the Encyclopædists were right in many of their theories, but they were not musicians and many of their opinions shot wide of the mark in consequence. They considered indeed that there was far too much music in French opera!

Rousseau, the leader of these attacks, had really an extraordinarily keen feeling for music, without being "musical" in the true sense of the word.

One must grant him a knack of melody, a certain facility in composing even. His opera, *Le Devin du Village*, contained some pretty airs which became, and have remained, popular. In rustic scenes he created some charming effects by simple means, and his air, "Allons dormir sous les ormeaux," became almost a folk song in Geneva. The loves of Colin and Colinette in the song. "Quand on sait bien aimer que la vie est charmante," was also deservedly a success. Grétry pronounced him an artist possessing sentiment but ignoring the rules of his art. In short, Rousseau possessed a keen musical sense, was extremely impressionable as regards music, but this did not make him a musician; moreover, he never seemed to realise that his lack of musical education was in any way an impediment to perfect understanding. Rousseau went on attacking French opera, its artists and composers so savagely that at last the exasperated operatic artists solemnly burnt his effigy one evening, whilst the directors refused him admission to their performance henceforth—a prohibition only withdrawn some twenty years later at Gluck's special request.

He ridiculed operatic stage effects, "the cars of gods and goddesses consisting of planks suspended by a cord, with a piece of cloth hanging in front painted to represent a cloud, the demons issuing from trap doors and climbing into the clouds . . . the frightful cries and groans from the singers, whilst the orchestra is a ceaseless *charivari* of in-

struments, no melody, a perpetual droning and buzzing in the bass, the most gloomy, deadening noise I ever heard in my life," and he described the joy of the audience when anything like an Air emerged.

His letter on French music (1753) is amusingly dogmatic: "I think I have made it clear that there is neither rhythm nor melody in French music, because the language is not capable of it; that French singing is a continual barking, unbearable to any ear not accustomed to it; that French harmony is crude, without expression and showing its scholastic origin; that French *Airs* are no *Airs*, that French *recitative* is not *recitative* at all. Whence I conclude that the French have no music and cannot have any; or that if ever they had a music of their own, so much the worse for them."

Thus the philosopher. It is worthy of note that some years later Rousseau became a Gluck-worshipper and an ardent champion of French against Italian music! This was in the war of Gluckistes *versus* Piccinistes.

Rousseau's letter naturally excited heated controversy. Rameau replied from the point of view of the musician, and was drawn into a passionate and bitter discussion, in which his lack of clearness and literary style often placed him at a disadvantage. Unfortunately he was not in touch or in sympathy with the aspirations and ideals of his day (how unlike Lully, the man of his moment!)

and clung to his spectacular splendours and regular "symphonies," utterly failing to realise the need for a new form of art.

In these years Rameau did not compose much, but wrote his "Démonstration du Principe de l'Harmonie" and "Nouvelles Reflexions sur la Démonstration du Principe de l'Harmonie servant de base à tout l'art Musicale" (1752).

His "Ballet Héroïque" *Acanthe et Céphise* (1751), one of the usual spectacular pieces, written to celebrate the birth of the Duc de Bourgogne, was the last of his larger works, but several small one-act pieces, chiefly played at Court, followed. *Les Paladins*, in three acts, was the last of his works performed at the opera and was not a success, the public disliked its mixture of serious and comic elements. The unsparing critics declared that Rameau was now too old and should cease composing. He himself knew well enough that they were right. He was ill as well as old and grew weaker day by day. To a friend he said: "Every day I improve in style, but I have no longer any genius." (*De jour en jour j'acquiers du goût, mais je n'ai plus de génie*).

Another book on theory, "Observations sur notre Instinct pour la Musique," was published in 1754 and, whatever faults the Encyclopædists might find in it, the Censor, a certain M. Trublet, approved of the work in these terms: "By order of Monseigneur le Chancelier I have read a manuscript entitled 'Observations on our Instinct for

Music, etc.,’ and I believe that the publication of the same would be both an honour and a service rendered to French music. Paris, 12 April, 1754. Trublet.”

This book, in beautifully clear type, is interesting reading for musicians, containing as it does the gropings of a mind of genius after a solution which eluded his grasp. It is rather pathetic to read the old musician’s cogitations on Harmony and on the mysterious reason which leads the human mind to regard the Fifth, for instance, as a peculiarly satisfactory interval, and to compare this book with elementary text books of to-day, in which children learn what the old genius vainly sought.

“La Musique est une science qui doit avoir des règles certaines,” he had said in his *Traité* of 1722, and all his later writings were but variations on this theme. Music, he insisted, was a physico-mathematical science and he himself had been led to study it mathematically from his youth upward. His philosophical mind was chiefly interested in harmony. “It is harmony and not melody which guides us,” he declared, and “a musical sound is complex, containing a kind of interior song,” therefore we must begin by studying the nature of sound.

He noticed how “ordinary folk, not musicians, instinctively sing or play the right bass note to a melody,” and felt that this must be based upon a natural law.



Rousseau criticised Rameau's musical theories as he criticised his music, and his ignorance led him to some foolish conclusions. He flatly contradicted Rameau's theory as to the necessity of the harmonic bass, "M. Rameau claims that the upper or melodic part naturally suggests its bass and that anyone with a true although untrained ear will naturally find this bass. This is a musician's pre-conceived idea, one always disproved by experience. One who has never heard either bass or harmony will never find either harmony or bass, nay more, he will not like them if he does hear them, and will greatly prefer simple unison." Rousseau himself is convinced that no harmony is so delightful as unison, and if we want chords it is because our taste is depraved. He had heard a child playing single notes on the piano, its hands being too small to grasp chords, and was charmed by the effect.

Meantime, in spite of the persecutions of his enemies, Rameau still enjoyed the fame of an established reputation and in these last years revivals of his works still excited enthusiasm. When *Dardanus*, for instance, was revived in 1760, a perfect storm of applause greeted the old man when he was discovered hiding shyly, as was his wont, in a corner of his box. He was not without honour in his own country, for Dijon had solemnly exempted him and his relatives from taxation, and as a further mark of esteem made him member of her Académie in 1761. In the same year Louis



XV. conferred the rank of nobility upon him with the order of St. Michel.

Close upon eighty years of age he still devoted himself to the theory of his beloved art, working feverishly in spite of failing strength.

His *Code de Musique Pratique* (1760), *L'Origine des Sciences* (1761), and a last investigation into musical sound, le "corps sonore," appeared in 1762 with a *Lettre aux Philosophes*. In spite of illness he was preparing to conduct rehearsals of a last work, *Abaris ou les Boréades*, an opera in five acts, when he grew rapidly worse and died in his house in the Rue des Bons Enfants, 22nd September 1764. There is a story, characteristic if not true, that almost with his last breath he reproved the priest at his bedside for intoning out of tune.

His death was regarded as a national calamity. Paris honoured her musician by a splendid funeral at the Church of St. Eustace. Most of the principal cities held memorial services and a fortnight after his death a Mass for the repose of his soul was celebrated at the Church of *Les Pères de l'Oratoire*, at which the orchestra performed selections from *Castor et Pollux* and others of his works. The expense of this was borne by the Opera, and 1,600 invitations were issued in the name of the widow and her son. Not only was the church crowded, but for several years the anniversary of Rameau's death was observed in a similar way.

A coldly eulogistic epitaph ran thus:

“Ci-gît le célèbre Rameau.  
Il fut par son vaste génie  
De la Musique le flambeau,  
Et l'objet des traits de l'envie.  
Muses, pleurez sur son tombeau.”<sup>1</sup>

Rameau, the man, appears to have been reserved and unapproachable in an extraordinary degree. Where Lully's success had been in a great measure due to his own personal popularity, or at all events influence, Rameau won fame really in spite of himself, solely by the force of his genius. Certainly he was not popular, scarcely amiable. Reserved and taciturn, he had few friends and even his wife knew next to nothing of his early life. In his funeral oration the friend of his last years was obliged to confess that he knew scarcely anything about Rameau's private life. He was no courtier, nor did he ever condescend to seek favour with any one, great or small. Chabanon relates a characteristic anecdote: A *maître de Ballet* wanted Rameau to shorten some of his minuets, urging that Royalty might find them too long. “Sir,” replied Rameau, “if he is not told that he will find them long, he will think they are short.”

Of Rameau's domestic relations little is known, but the fact that his youngest daughter, Marie Alexandrine, married the Mousquetaire de Gaul-

<sup>1</sup> “Here lies the celebrated Rameau.  
Whose great genius was the torch of Music  
And the object of Envy's darts.  
Muses, weep upon his tomb.”

thier immediately after her father's death perhaps shows that in his lifetime he had opposed the match. On the other hand, he bestowed a handsome dowry on his other daughter, Marie Louise, on her entrance into a convent.

The only son, Claude François, obtained the post of "Valet de chambre du roi" through his father's influence, a post which cost Rameau quite a large sum of money in addition to a handsome yearly allowance.

He was accused of undue harshness towards a nephew, Jean François, threatening to have him transported to the Colonies for some *escapade* or other. But on the showing of Diderot even, the young man seems to have been an incorrigibly hopeless character, who abused his uncle's kindness and hospitality. And it is known that Rameau sent yearly sums of money to his sister the *Claveciniste* at Dijon during the last years of her life, sums regularly paid up to the year of her death, 1762.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rameau wrote a kind and helpful letter to a young man who asked for his advice about composing an opera (1740). "One must understand the art of staging, have studied Nature so as to depict her as faithfully as possible; one must visualise all the characters, must *feel* dancing and its movements, not to speak of all details; must know the voice, the art of acting, etc. The Ballet would be better than Tragedy as a beginning. . . . . Before attempting a big work one must have written smaller ones, cantatas, *divertissements*, a thousand trifles of the kind which feed and inspire the mind and render one unconsciously capable of the greatest things. I watched the stage since I was twelve; I was fifty before I composed opera, even then I did not consider myself capable of doing so. I ventured, succeeded, continued."

Rameau was tall and unusually thin, attenuated even; an unkind description compared him to an organ pipe, with legs like flutes. His features were large and strongly marked, with piercing black eyes. He had a marked resemblance to Voltaire, and a picture of the two meeting shows the resemblance strikingly. His voice was loud and harsh and in discussion he would shout excitedly until exhausted, when his voice would fail and reduce him to silence, still gasping and gesticulating helplessly.

He loved to take long solitary walks and his tall spare figure was a familiar object striding along by the Tuileries or out in the country. Apparently he would be rapt in meditation, perhaps thinking out a musical phrase or pondering over some problem of harmony. But once when a friend, meeting him, enquired what he was thinking of, Rameau gazed at him absently for a moment and then answered "Nothing." Probably his mind was working unconsciously to himself, for often on returning home he would hastily write out or play some new theme. (He usually composed violin in hand, not often at the harpsichord).

His enemies declared he had no heart; that he was incapable of affection. Diderot said Rameau's wife and daughter might die but he would not care, provided the passing bell tolled in tune; further, he was mean, avaricious, pitiless towards creditors. Avaricious, Rameau probably was. At the time of his death his house was very poorly

furnished, he and his wife were wretchedly dressed, yet large sums were found in the drawers of his writing table. There are instances recorded in which he drove hard bargains. Perhaps he had learnt the value of money too well in those long years of grinding poverty in his youth and early manhood. Yet the instances of kindness and even generosity towards sister and nephew must not be forgotten. And Rameau was free from petty jealousy. He would praise the work of others unstintingly, even of his enemies, when they deserved it. For instance, he praised the Italian opera, the most formidable rival of his own.<sup>1</sup> He was really too shy to make many friends or enjoy great popularity and always hid at the back of his box at the Opera. Once after a successful performance of one of his works at Fontainebleau he was found hiding in a remote and disused apartment. He said that applause embarrassed him, he did not know how to receive it. Shy, proud, reserved, frugal, simple, harsh—these are not characteristics which appeal to the great world.

In reality Rameau's whole soul centred in music, all else mattered little. As Piron said of him: "All his mind and all his soul were in his harpsichord and when he had closed that, the house was empty, there was no one at home." When composing, he would sing in a very harsh voice, play his shabby old *clavecin*, shout, gesticulate. And at rehearsals he seemed completely possessed by

1 He admired Lully generously. "Lully thought on a grand scale," he said.

his art; if anyone ventured to approach, he would waive the intruder impatiently away without even glancing at him. He was very severe and *brusque* with his librettists.

But he was known to shed tears when a musical performance pleased him. There is a touching simplicity about his devotion to music. When some one asked him, a few months before his death, if he did not really prefer the sound of applause to the music of his operas, the old man thought for a moment and then said seriously, "No, I like my music best."

Music was certainly Rameau's life. And what interested him most was really the theory of music. He even thought time spent in composition wasted in comparison with that used in investigating the principles of his art. He certainly considered his Theory of music the best part of himself. With endless patience he pursued the problems of sound, to him elusive, but laying precious foundations for future students.

Rameau was the first to investigate the nature of chords, the products of polyphonic melody, "groups of sounds." For the conception of music as Harmony was now being definitely substituted for that of Polyphony. Rameau's assertion that Harmony and not Melody should be the guiding principle drew upon him the wrath of the Encyclopædists who recognised in Melody the simplicity they so ardently desired. Rameau's constant broodings and searchings into the phenomena

of sound are interesting. He notices that the human voice naturally rises from a note to its Fifth and that the ear naturally provides a bass to a melody. Any musician of even small attainments, in accompanying a song heard for the first time, employs the Fifth, later he may use the Third. The Fifth is evidently the most perfect interval, then the Third. And he traces the Fifth to the vibrations of a musical note (*corps sonore*). In this he followed Descartes, noting the intervals of the Harmonic Chord and their order. This had already been done, e.g., in Zerlino's "*Institutions Harmoniques*," but Rameau's discovery that the fourth and sixth are inversions of the common chord was original, although at the time other students were working on similar lines. Before Rameau many inversions had been considered separate chords. Later theorists like Helmholtz and Riemann acknowledge Rameau's contribution to musical science.

In his own day his theories attracted attention both at home and abroad. In other countries he was, in fact, better known as a theorist than as a musician; and in Germany his ideas were keenly discussed.

J. S. Bach and his son Philip Emmanuel were both "*antiramistes*," yet the great Bach taught his pupils Rameau's "*Basse fondamentale*" all the same. Haendel held Rameau in high esteem, and the *Traité de l'Harmonie* was translated into English. In provincial France Rameau was greatly,



although perhaps uncomprehendingly, respected, and after his death he was ranked among the Geometricians, as M. de Laurencie says, placed somewhere between a "Traité sur les Sections Coniques" and a book on Algebra!

It is indeed rare to find this combination of the scientist and the creative artist, but in Rameau the two were united, not, in fact, without detriment to his reputation as a composer. In his earlier days, Lullystes reproached him for being too mechanical, dubbing him the Geometrician who composed according to algebraic formulas. The term "savant" applied to his compositions was a damning criticism. Yet Rameau himself aimed constantly at Nature, which he declared the source of all art, just as Lully had done before him. Perhaps he was too apt to theorise about the means of expressing "Nature." He insisted, for instance, that each chord corresponded to an emotion; there are sad, languishing, tender, gay and surprising chords. Joy is expressed by concords, sadness by discords and minor keys, grief and suffering by unprepared discords. His *Plaintes Tendres* contains diminished chords and chords of the 9th and 11th. "The scale of *fa* is appropriate to tempests and rages. *Re, la, mi* to grand and magnificent styles; *ut* and *fa* minor to 'chants lugubres.'" But he concludes that, after all, composers must write as they are inspired. He had, says M. Prunières, une "mentalité harmonique" and felt harmony to be of supreme importance, melody only secondary,



even insisting that when pupils are taught singing, every melody should be accompanied by its full harmony in order to educate the ear.

His clear, logical mind, reflective rather than spontaneously emotional, turned towards descriptive music. It was the fashion then to portray natural objects in sound,—witness the charming *genre* pieces of the clavecinistes,—and Rameau wrote Programme music quite as much as moderns do. In the Prologue of *Dardanus* there is a scene, “The Pleasures in conflict with Jealousy,” both characterised by typical *motifs*. These themes are stated separately until “Jealousy, pursued by Venus, ceases to fret the Pleasures; they gradually grow languid and finally fall asleep.” In *Platée* (ballet comique) there are imitations of frogs croaking, birds, a donkey braying.

In a “*scène infernale*” (*Castor et Pollux*, Act 4) Rameau surpassed his predecessors, who had simply assigned to Demons the musical expression usually employed to portray Anger; they never had any “local colour,” says M. Laloy.<sup>1</sup> But Rameau contrived by rhythm and harmony to give them “atmosphere,” and his “*chœur infernale*” remained unrivalled until Gluck’s *Orpheus* surpassed it.

Rameau’s descriptive Harpsichord Pieces follow the fashion of the day (*Rappel des Oiseaux*, *La Poule*, etc.) He anticipated Debussy in *Les Tour-*

<sup>1</sup> Laloy, L. *Rameau*.

*billons*, in which he tried to render "gusts of wind stirring up whirls of dust."

It is curious to find Rameau insisting that "the ruling quality of French music is Sentiment, which has no precise movement and therefore cannot be forced into regular rhythm without losing the charm of Truthfulness." For his own best work, the music in which he showed himself most truly and spontaneously inspired, is his dance music. His Dance Tunes are masterpieces in which his mastery of rhythm, his instinct for clearness and concision are most evident, they are his most original works; whilst his vocal airs, not well written for the voice, are forgotten. Rameau's dance tunes were frequently used in Italy and other countries for the Ballets in Italian opera, so far superior were they to all others.<sup>1</sup> He did not modulate much or vary his tonality by chromatics, but he was considered very daring in his famous modulation from F minor to E flat, which occurs in *Castor and Pollux* ("que tout gémissé," Act 1). Adam alludes to this as a touch of genius, great in its simplicity. For over half a century musicians went on quoting Rameau's *fa, la, mi* as the most daring modulation conceivable. Rameau himself marvelled at Lully's skill in rising from Subdominant to Tonic. "Then, striding to Dominant with redoubled energy . . . again rousing our desire for the Tonic which must follow, etc."

<sup>1</sup> Funeral oration, Maret. Even Diderot said Rameau's dance tunes would be immortal.

Rameau's *recitative* does not differ essentially from Lully's. *La vérité dans la déclamation* was still the device. Both tried to express emotion by following the accents of the spoken word. Rameau, however, supported his *recitative* more fully by harmony during the whole of the phrase instead of merely punctuating it by a cadence at the end. Also he modulated more freely and used augmented and diminished intervals (notably the fifth) to express grief or anxiety. According to his theories ascending notes and phrases express joy, eagerness, hope, etc., descending ones the reverse. Sometimes he lets the voice fall over a long interval, e.g., the tenth. A descending chromatic passage in *Hippolyte* had to be abandoned because of its difficulty, and his enemies were always complaining of his difficult music.

He was more successful with instrumental than with vocal music.

His orchestra had the same instruments as that of his predecessors: strings and woodwind, with the harpsichord as support in the bass. But he made more use of the strings and his violin parts were fuller. Also he wrote more melodious parts for horns, giving them difficult running passages. By novel combinations of *timbres* and by groups of instruments he obtained more colour. In *les Surprises d'Amour* he introduced two groups: violins and flutes for "Sybarites," trumpets and kettledrums for warriors. He accented his melodies sometimes by *pizzicato* effects. He was rather fond

of mechanical subjects such as tempests, earthquakes, fire music, and made great effects with the simple means at his disposal. For storms, for instance, he employed scales in contrary motion; fire he suggests by brilliant sparkles of trills and grace notes (*Zoroaster*). Sometimes the titles of his descriptive music are very ambitious (not more so than those of his contemporaries), e.g., "The Monster Leaving the Waves," "The Clearing of Chaos" (prologue of *Zaïs*), "The Assault of Titans," attempted by syncopated notes expressing rugged, broken effort.<sup>1</sup>

In a quaint pamphlet (Riedel) Lully and Rameau meet as shades in the Elysian Fields and, on hearing of Gluck ("the name sounds rather Tudesque," says Rameau), they enquire, what does the world think of Us since the appearance of *Iphigénie*? They are told, "All persons of taste say: in the harmony of M. Rameau there is too much art and in the melody of M. Lully there is too little. But the composer of *Iphigénie* has united your remarkable talents with everything else. . . . he has had the good fortune to surpass you." A point of view open to the criticism of posterity.

<sup>1</sup> M. de la Laurencie. See Prof. Nieck's "The orchestration of J. P. Rameau." *Monthly Musical Record*, 1910.

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*Operas*

- 1733. Hippolyte et Aricie. (Pellegrin).
- 1735. Les Indes Galantes. (Fuzelier).
- 1737. Castor et Pollux. (Bernard).
- 1739. Les Festes d'Hébé ou les Talens Lyriques.  
(Mondorge and others).
- Dardanus. (Leclerc de la Bruère).
- 1745. La Princesse de Navarre. (Voltaire).
- Le Temple de la Gloire. (Voltaire).
- Platée ou Junon jalouse. (D'Autreau et  
d'Orville).
- Les Fêtes de Polymnie. (Cahusac).
- Les Fêtes de Ramire. (Voltaire).
- 1747. Les Fêtes de l'Hymen et de l'Amour.  
(Cahusac).
- 1748. Zaïs. (Cahusac).
- Pygmalion. (Sovot).
- Les Surprises de l'Amour. (Marmontel &  
Bernard).
- 1749. Naïs. (Cahusac).
- Zoroastre. (Cahusac).
- 1751. La Guirlande ou les fleurs enchantées.  
(Marmontel).
- Acanthe et Céphise. (Marmontel).
- 1753. Daphnis et Eglée. (Collé).
- Lisis et Délie. (Marmontel).
- 1754. La Naissance d'Osiris. (Cahusac).
- Anacréon. (Cahusac).

1760. Les Paladins. (Monticourt).  
 Nélée et Myrthis (pastorale) } Authors  
 Zéphyre (pastorale) } unknown.  
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*Pieces for Harpsichord*

Four volumes: 1706; 1724; between 1727-1731;  
 1741 (with violin or flute).

*La Dauphine.* 1747.

*Cantatas*

*Le Berger fidèle. Aquilon et Orinthie.* . 1728

*Motets*

*Laboravi* . 1732. *Il convertendo* . 1751

*Theoretical Works*

*Nouveau Système de musique théorique* . 1726

*Génération harmonique* . . . . 1737

*Démonstration du principe de l'Harmonie*  
*servant de base à tout l'art Musical,*  
*théorique et pratique* . . . . 1750

*Nouvelles réflexions sur la démonstration du*  
*principe de l'Harmonie servant de*  
*base à tout l'art musical, théorique et*  
*pratique* . . . . 1752

*Observations sur notre instinct pour la mus-*  
*ique et sur son principe* . . . . 1754

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CHAPTER III

THE CLAVECIN COMPOSERS

1600-1768





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### THE CLAVECIN COMPOSERS

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THE music written for clavecin or harpsichord in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is of great importance as being the forerunner, or rather the ancestor, of all modern literature for the Pianoforte, whilst from the old masters of the clavecin the brilliant pianists of our day have developed. In an unbroken line is the evolution from virginal or spinet, harpsichord, clavichord to concert grand. In the same way compositions develop from the simplicity of English Tudor composers for the Virginal (Tallis, Bird, Ball, Morley, of the sixteenth century<sup>1</sup>), through the school of French clavecin composers, through Emmanuel Bach, Scarlatti, Mozart, to Beethoven and the moderns.

The spinet gradually supplanted the lute as the instrument for solos and accompaniments, for chamber music in short, and by the end of the sixteenth century it had become a favourite, especially with women.

<sup>1</sup> See "Parthenia, or the Maydenhead of the first Musick that was ever printed for the Virginalls," 1611.

Queen Elizabeth played the virginals strictly for her own amusement, not encouraging courtiers to listen and criticise. A later queen, Marie Antoinette, was quite a talented performer on the harpsichord and her playing delighted the Court. There was even a woman composer, Elizabeth Claudine, (the wife of La Guerre, organist of Saint Severin), who composed a *Recueil de Sonates pour Clavecin* (1669-1729). During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the post of spinet player to kings and queens was one of the regular appointments of royal households.

Among the earlier of these court harpsichord players in France were Matthieu Dugay (1548), Augustin Langlois (1559), Claude Chabebusseau (1602), Jacques Champion Sieur de la Chapelle (1609), Jacques le Breton (1624).

The harpsichord was used also in orchestras and churches until the end of the eighteenth century.

The chief French Clavecinistes lived during the period 1600-1768 and include Chambonnières, Loeilly, Couperin, Rameau, Schobert. The first of these is really the father of the French School of harpsichord players and composers.

Jacques Champion de Chambonnières, (after his marriage to a widow of Chambonnières he added the name of her estate to his own and is known by it), came of a musical family. Both his father and grandfather (Thomas and Jacques Champion) were organists. Born under Louis XIII, about 1620, the date of his death is approximately 1670. Like

the rest of his family, he played the organ well, but the harpsichord was the instrument on which he really excelled. He was famous as a performer and especially noted for his soft yet full tone. Few details as to his life are preserved, and little of his music. He was chief court clavecinist under Louis XIV and founded a school of clavecin players. Among his pupils are Hardelle, Buret, Gautier, François and Louis Couperin, uncles of "le grand" Couperin. Evidently he had a prosperous career and showed, moreover, a generous nature in encouraging and instructing Louis Couperin. It chanced that once during his visits to his country estate a serenade written by a young and untaught musician was submitted to him. Chambonnières was so struck by it that he brought the composer, Louis Couperin, to Paris as a pupil and afterwards introduced him at Court, where he obtained an appointment; the rest of the Couperin family came to Paris and became noted musicians.

Chambonnières composed dances of every kind: Courantes, Giges, Sarabandes, Pavanes, grouping them in *Suites* and giving each piece a descriptive title (as was the fashion at that time), although the titles seldom show any real connection with the music. He has such titles as *La Dunkerque*, *La Toute Belle*, *Iris*, *La Rare*. This fashion originated with the lute-players, who had made descriptive titles a matter of form, often without any connection with the music.

A critic complains that in a piece for the lute

supposed to describe a storm, it was a pity the composer had not added a note to say *when* it lightened and when it thundered.<sup>1</sup>

Chambonnières' works are nearly always written in four parts and in good counterpoint. His style is simple and clear, with few of the embellishments and ornaments so much in favour at that period.

*La Rare* (in A minor) is one of his most interesting pieces; others are a Courante, Sarabande and a Loureuse (slow dance in 6/4 time). He published two volumes of "Pièces de Clavessin," but specimens of his score are extremely rare.<sup>2</sup>

The Couperins were another of those families of musicians who spring up in unexpected places like rare plants, flourishing for a generation or two until their artistic vitality is exhausted, and culminating usually in one supreme genius. The Couperins were musicians during two hundred years, and François, called "le grand," was their genius.

The original family (of Chaumes en Brie), consisted of three brothers: François, Louis and Charles, who all came to settle in Paris through the influence of Chambonnières and became musicians of repute. All three were organists of the Church of St. Gervais, and Louis, as we have seen, was made Court musician (1630-1665).

Charles, the father of "le grand," died young

<sup>1</sup> In a volume of *Pieces for the Lute* (Denis Gaultier) occurs the title, "Phaeton struck by lightning."

<sup>2</sup> M. Farrenc possessed some of his original score.

(1632-1669), François being born only a year before his father's death. But a friend of the family, one Tomelin, an organist, practically adopted the child and taught him the organ. In course of time François too received the post of organist at St. Gervais, but the date of his appointment is uncertain.

His fame, however, both as performer and composer, rests on the clavecin. His life seems to have been uneventful; he was of the fortunate ones whose history is too smooth for chronicling. Like Chambonnières, he became harpsichord player to the king, was greatly admired at Court, *fêted* and flattered in aristocratic houses.

Fashionable gatherings were incomplete without Couperin at the harpsichord, whilst on Sunday evenings the king desired his presence at court Chamber concerts. He mentions this in the introduction to his Third Book of Pieces for the Clavecin (published 1722) under the title "Concerts Royaux." He had written these pieces especially for the "petits concerts du roi," at which he played the harpsichord nearly every Sunday throughout the year, and he trusts the public will like these pieces as much as the late king did. Musicians were certainly sure of an appreciative listener in Louis XIV; no monarch ever loved music more. He enjoyed the "petits concerts" as much as Grand Opera, and occasionally sang an air himself at these evenings. He evidently recognised Couperin's genius and treated him generously, as was his wont with artists. "For twenty years," Coup-

erin says, "I have had the honour of being in the King's service and of teaching Monseigneur le Dauphin, the Duc de Bourgogne and six other Princes and Princesses of the Royal House." And in his dedication to Louis XV of his *Méthode de Clavecin* (1716) he speaks of "the tokens of kindness and satisfaction bestowed on me by the late King, your great grandfather, during the twenty-three years during which he listened to my works; those bestowed by your august father, to whom I had the privilege of teaching composition and counterpoint for more than twelve years." (A somewhat long course of instruction without apparently any striking result).

He was the fashionable teacher of the harpsichord, and great ladies were proud of being his pupils. His *Art de toucher le Clavecin* (1717), the first book of instruction especially devoted to the instrument, shows him an enthusiastic and painstaking teacher. He instructs the pupils not only in notation and *technique*, but how to sit gracefully at the clavier, the right foot slightly extended, the arm horizontal, forming a straight line from elbow to fingers, sometimes with a bar placed above the hands of the beginner to regulate their height, for the tone becomes hard if the hands are held too high. . . . .

He especially warns the pupil against mannerisms of all kinds, such as "coquetting with the public"; sometimes he even places a mirror so that the pupil may see and correct any awkwardness or

“grimaces.” We, however, see reflected in the mirror, not the pupil’s awkwardness, but Couperin’s polished, elegant, courtly self. The “Préludes” appended to this book were really exercises for pupils; he calls them “Prose literature of the harpsichord.”

He says that a study of this “Art of harpsichord playing” is absolutely indispensable for those who wish to play his pieces in their proper style.

Couperin speaks of Time (*mesure*) and “Cadence ou Mouvement,” by which he seems to mean phrasing. He says that Italian music does not possess this “Cadence,” which is really the mind and soul of music. (It is curious that Rameau, too, considered French music expressive and Italian music the reverse).

Couperin says: “All our violin airs, our Pièces de Clavecin, de violes, etc., seem to express some sentiment. Therefore, as we (the editorial ‘we’) have no signs or characters to explain our own ideas, we try to make up for it by placing words such as *Tendrement*, *Vivement*, etc., before our pieces. I wish someone would take the trouble to translate these for the use of foreigners.”

He considered women’s hands far better adapted to the clavecin than men’s, and taught the ladies of his own family to play. His cousin Louise was well known as a performer, (probably “La Couperin” was dedicated to her), whilst his daughter Marguérite Antoinette was appointed player at court and musical instructress of the Princesses.



She was, by the way, the first woman to occupy such a position in France.

We get a glimpse of Couperin's temperament in his remark that strong hands, capable of exciting the most rapid and light passages, are not always most successful in pieces requiring tenderness and expression. "I confess that I greatly prefer what touches to what surprises me," he says. This taste is exactly what one would expect in the composer of his exquisite little pieces, so modern in their expressive charm.

He was very fond of his chosen instrument and jealous of its reputation. "The harpsichord-player is the last to be praised for his share in a *concerto*. What injustice! His accompaniment is the foundation of a building, which supports the whole, but of which no one ever speaks!" He recognises its shortcomings however. "The harpsichord is perfect as regards compass and has a brilliance of its own, but as one can neither increase nor diminish its tone, I should be grateful to anyone sufficiently skilful and artistic to render this instrument capable of expression.<sup>1</sup> My ancestors attempted this task apart from their compositions!"

As one of Couperin's nephews married the daughter of a harpsichord maker, it is possible that some of the family were practically interested in clavecin manufacture.

1 The harpsichord had "a note which no manipulation of the key could prolong or sustain or alter in quality; and the instrument was therefore specially adapted to clear, cold, polyphonic writing, in which the parts moved almost equally well with

French harpsichord music is usually in dance form and most of Couperin's pieces are dances.

He wrote Courantes, Minuets, Chaconnes, Passacaglie, Sarabandes, Gavottes, Gigue, grouping them together in *suites* or "Ordres" (as he called them) and dedicating them to great ladies or patrons. He published some twenty-seven of these "Ordre" volumes between 1713-1730. Following the fashion of the day, he bestows descriptive titles on his pieces, and claims to portray in music the characteristics of the "models." The French have always been fond of descriptive music, and in Couperin's pieces they no doubt recognised allusions to persons or to passing events which have lost their meaning for us.

Couperin himself certainly meant them as pictures or portraits. He says in his dedication to the First Book, "I have always had an object in composing all these pieces, inspired by various events; the titles correspond to the ideas I had in my mind; I need not explain them, but as some of the titles may seem to be flattering me,<sup>1</sup> it is perhaps as well to mention that the pieces bearing them are in a way portraits which have sometimes been considered very characteristic when I played them. Most of these pretty titles are bestowed rather on

an almost uniform tone . . . . There were mechanical devices whereby the whole volume of tone could be suddenly increased or diminished; there were none for swelling it by insensible degrees or bringing into prominence some special note of the chord."—Hadow, *Oxford History of Music*.

<sup>1</sup> " . . . me flater " (sic).

the charming originals whom I wished to portray than on the copies of my making." (This may mean that he designated a lady by a title, dedicating a piece to her?) He adds that he had taken great pains to have the book well printed, sparing neither money nor time, it had taken over a year to produce properly.

Besides the names of fair women there are names of dancers of both sexes (nicknames were given to dancers at that time, such as the Princess, the Bird, the Devil, the Restless One). These have no significance for us, nor can we identify "Fleurie ou la tendre Nanette," "Mimi," or "Soeur Monique" (that especially charming little piece). Names of landscapes are naturally merely titles: Bourbon, Basque, Charleroi. Strange titles suggest character-description: the Enchantress, the Voluptuous Woman, the Lugubrious or Gloomy Woman, the Chatterbox, the Turbulent Man. There are even a Troubled Soul (*Ame en Peine*), a Convalescent, Wandering Shades (*spectres*), Working Women and a March of Men in grey. (*Marche des gris-vêtus*). Whoever the *Gris Vêtus* may have been, their march is to be played "heavily but not slow." *La Lugubre* has heavy chords (in C minor). The Prude is a Sarabande bristling with grace notes and "agréments." . . . *Atalante* is in lightly running passages. A curious title is *Slight Mourning or the three Widows*, not a serious mourning-piece, however, it is in A major and to be played "gracieusement." *The Spinner* (*La Fileuse*), with its

humming accompaniment in the bass, anticipated many modern spinning songs. And Couperin's Bees, Butterflies, Grasshopper, Will o' the Wisp all seem suggestive titles which invite imitation. The *Hunt*, too, offers opportunities for obvious description, so does *Reveille Matin*, with its *fanfares*. The *Eel* seems unique. *Dodo or Love in the cradle* is as tenderly expressive as a modern cradle song.

M. Farrenc, who has published Couperin's "Pièces de Clavecin" in his fine series, "Le Trésor des Pianistes," classifies them in an interesting manner.

La Florentine, la Mylordine, les Papillons, La Lutine, le Carillon de Cythère and Soeur Monique have "charming melodies, graceful and natural."

La Logivière, la Marche des Gris-vêtus, Passacaille, La Superbe, l'Audacieuse, la Visionnaire, "are more interesting in their harmony."

La Voluptueuse, la Lugubre, l'Ame en peine, les Ombres Errantes, la Convalescente, are "very expressive, varied and original." And le Reveille-Matin, la Diligente, la Commère (the gossip), les Tricoteuses (the Knitters), are "vivacious and brilliant."

In some of these musical pieces imitation is quite evident, as in Les Tricoteuses, or the Man with the grotesque Body, who jumps in detached notes, etc.

In these pieces the music is simple. Couperin usually employs two voices, occasionally three, seldom full chords. They are contrapuntal in style;

but the soprano leads the melody and is very richly ornamented with *agréments*, grace-notes, trills, etc., in order to help out the weak tone of the instrument. For the same reason chords in arpeggio are held down by all fingers so that more sound is obtained. He also employs a sign to indicate a phrase, which the performer should make evident. He modulates to the dominant, relative minor and the nearly related keys. Under Couperin the Rondo began to develop from a simple dance form, foreshadowing the Sonata. But the great charm of his music is its expressive quality; in this he far surpasses all his contemporaries, Marchand, Daquin, even Rameau, who wrote some delightful clavier pieces in *genre style* (*Le Rappel des Oiseaux, La Poule, etc.*) These, like Daquin's *Le Coucou*, were cleverly descriptive, but Couperin aimed at psychological portrayal, being, in fact, a forerunner of Schumann. He is the first composer with a definite conscious note of modern expression.

*Les Petits Ages* is a little cycle of four pieces: Muse naissante, Enfantine, Adolescente, Délices.

There is also a Ballet called the *Pomp or Masque of the great and ancient Minstrelsy* (Ménéstrandise) with its five acts of descriptive dances, a picture in music of an ancient fair or Masque. It contains the entry of the Notables. The song of Beggars and Hurdygurdy men. The dances of Jugglers and Merry Andrews with bears and monkeys. Duet of the crazy and lame. And in the *finale*, the animals break loose and there is a general stampede.

In *Les Folies Françaises ou les dominos* there are distinct foreshadowings of Schumann's "Carneval" and "Papillons," psychological characterisation and programme music.

These are twelve very short pieces, a kind of variations on the same harmonic foundation. The titles are the most curious part of them, each domino is supposed to have a different colour: Virginity in a colour which is invisible. Modesty in rose colour. Ardour in red. Hope in green. Faithfulness in blue. Perseverance in grey. Desire in Violet. Coquetry in varied colours. Old gallants in purple. Silent jealousy in purple-grey. Despair and rage in black.

Curious is Couperin's partiality for 'cello effects in such pieces as *La Bandoline* and *Délices*. He evidently was seeking for a more expressive tone than that of the clavecin.

One pictures Couperin at court or in aristocratic salons, stately at the harpsichord, playing his compositions to an appreciative king, with great ladies listening attentively, amused and sometimes flattered by the piquant titles and allusions of his pieces. Or we see him giving excellent lessons to aristocratic pupils, always polished and affable, artist and man of the world. His plump rounded features look calmly prosperous and benign beneath the imposing wig of the period. A touch of cynicism is manifest in the dedication of his first book to a friend (one M. Pajot de Villers), to whom he expresses gratitude. "A man really sensible of

gratitude should be privileged because he is of such a rare species" (en faveur de la rareté de son espèce), therefore may he, Couperin, being grateful, have the privilege of offering this book, etc. . . .

The "engraving" of his works was an anxious matter. One book was delayed for a year, Couperin politely waiting until the "graveur" had finished some Viola compositions by a noted musician, "un des illustres de nos jours," who in his turn had on a former occasion politely waived *his* claim to the "graveur" in favour of Couperin.

In his quaint spelling he gives the address of the "auteur" as *rue de Poitou en Marais*. In spite of frequent illnesses which also, he says, delayed his compositions, Couperin lived to the age of sixty-five.

His wife was one Marie Anne Ansault, and his two daughters played the organ and the clavecin.

Marie Anne became a nun at the Abbaye of Maubuisson and was organist there, whilst Marguérite Antoinette was the distinguished court claveciniste.

In 1745 the wife claimed and was granted the rights of Couperin's compositions for twelve years after his death.

Louise, the daughter of the earlier François, was born after the removal of the family to Paris (1674) and died at Versailles (1738), having held her Court appointment for thirty years. Besides being a famous claveciniste she was also a talented singer.

Her brother Nicholas had a musical appointment at the Court of Toulouse (1680-1728). He was also



organist of St. Gervais, which seems, in fact, to have been held by all the Couperins in turn. François le Grand occupied the post too, but the date of his appointment is uncertain, as we have seen.

Two sons and a daughter of Nicholas continued the musical traditions of the family, the last of the line being one of these, Gervais François, still living in 1815, but described as of "mediocre" talent. He obtained posts as organist solely on the strength of his illustrious name. The genius of the family was exhausted.

Couperin's four books of *Pièces de Clavecin* appeared in 1713, 1717, 1722 and 1730 respectively.

In his third volume (1722) Couperin essays composing for other instruments besides the clavecin, for violin, flute, oboe, viola and bassoon. There are four of these concerted pieces which he calls "Concerts Royaux," and in the preface he says they were composed expressly for the little chamber concerts at the court on Sundays. Messieurs Duval, Philidor, Alarius and Dubois were the other performers, and Couperin himself played the harpsichord. These pieces have a figured bass, and Couperin adds that he had arranged them according to their tonalities, keeping the titles under which they were first presented to the Court in 1714-1715.

Another volume for various instruments appeared in 1724, called *Les goûts réunis*, containing among others a grand Sonata with Trio entitled *La Parnasse ou l'Apothéose de M. Corelli*.



Other works :

*L'Apothéose de l'Incomparable M. de Lully*,  
undated.

*Trios* for violin; his book *L'art de toucher le*  
*Clavecin* and

*Neuf leçons de Ténèbres à une et deux voix*.

Even in the *Apothéose* of Corelli and Lulli nothing was left to the imagination; it was all strictly "programme" music. Corelli is received on Mount Parnassus, he drinks of the fount of Hippocrene, expresses his delight, falls asleep to slumber music, and is assigned a place beside Apollo.

On the same lines Lulli arrives in the Elysian Fields and is met by Apollo, who presents a violin to him. The envy of Lulli's contemporaries is supposed to be heard in "subterranean sounds." Corelli welcomes Lulli and they make music together, each alternately leading. Italian and French muses unite in harmonious strains.

Jean Baptiste Loeilly (1660-1728) comes as a connecting link between Chambonnières and Couperin-le-Grand. He composed sonatas of great merit and a suite in G minor. Not succeeding in Paris, he came to England and became rich and famous as Court Director of concerts. He also wrote for the flute and a book of six lessons for harpsichord.

Schobert, the last great French harpsichordist, was a native of Strasbourg (1730-1768). His compositions were well known in England and Holland; they were chiefly sonatas and his style was different from that of the other clavecinistes, being

richer in harmony. He became harpsichord player to the Prince de Conti.

Other harpsichord composers were Jean Henri D'Anglebert, Court Musician under Louis XIV (1623-1692). Among other works he arranged Lully's airs for harpsichord.

Jean Louis Marchand (1669-1733), Court harpsichord player and organist. He lost the king's favour and was banished for a time. On visiting Dresden during his exile he was invited to take part in a contest of skill with Bach. Both masters played their own compositions and improvised, but Bach was so obviously superior that Marchand left before further comparisons could be made. On returning to Paris he was soon as popular as ever and had many pupils, receiving a *louis d'or* for a lesson, but was so extravagant that he died in poverty. Rameau was his pupil after his return from exile. Marchand composed two books of *Pièces de Clavecin*.

Louis Claude Daquin or d'Aquin (1694-1772), the pupil to whom Marchand gave a post of organist in preference to Rameau. On leaving his post at the Cordeliers, Marchand apostrophised his organ : "Adieu, chère veuve ! d'Aquin seul est digne de toi !" Besides clavecin pieces, among them "Le Coucou," which is still played, Daquin composed some Noël's and works for other instruments.

Jean François Dandrieu (1684-1740) wrote rustic dances (*Fête de Village*), a Hunting Piece (*chasse*) with descriptive music, and a Battle or War Piece

(*Les Caractères de la Guerre*) in which he imitates the firing of cannon by detached triads.

Rameau's charming *Pièces pour Clavecin* are familiar to all. The titles are all descriptive, some of the less known names are quite on Couperin's lines: "La Boiteuse" (the lame woman), "La Joyeuse," "L'Indifferente," etc. "Les Tourbillons," which Rameau explained as representing whirls of dust raised by wind, is a quaint forerunner of Debussy. "La Rameau" was perhaps his sister, the Claveciniste.

La Fontaine gives a pretty picture of the celebrated clavecin player, Mademoiselle Certain, the friend of Lully (1660-1711). On the way home from church he calls at "the famous Certain's" for a chat,

"In a thousand ways charming, a thousand ways wise,  
Mamselle Certain entrances our hearts and our eyes;  
Her brilliant fingers, her talent so rare,  
Surpass Hardel, les Couperins, Chambonnières.  
This charming girl's harpsichord touches my heart  
More than Isis and all other musical art;  
I ask nothing better, I crave nothing more  
To satisfy ears, eyes and heart in this hour."

"*Chez l'illustre Certain faire une station.  
Certain par mille endroits également charmante  
Et dans mille beaux-arts également savante,  
Dout le rare génie et les brillantes mains  
Surpassent Chambonnières, Hardel, les Couperains.  
De cette aimable enfant le clavecin unique  
Me touche plus qu' Isis et toute sa musique  
Je ne veux rien de plus et ne veux rien de mieux,  
Pour contenter l'esprit et l'oreille et les yeux.*"

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CHAPTER IV

ANDRÉ ERNEST MODESTE GRÉTRY

1741-1813



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ACROSS Grétry's later life, as across the youth of Méhul's fell the shadow of the Revolution. Until middle-age Grétry lived under the old régime, the settled order of things, the conventionalism which had crystallised everything—society, art, morality, into shapes so stiff that they could not change except by being broken. The air of the old régime seems to us heavy and stifling, but with flashes of the coming terrible storm. Under these conditions Grétry lived for his art and achieved fame. Then the storms of the Revolution burst and broke up his world. Everything was changed. But Grétry's nature could not change and his music remained uninfluenced by the passions raging outside art. He lent his genius to the service of the Revolution, it is true, but was not inspired to new strains. He says himself that the Revolution was no time for music or poetry. Poets had no need to write tragedies, "Tragedy walked the streets."

Grétry's music was tender, gay, playful, steeped in domestic sentiment. It appealed to the sentiment-



al side of men like Rousseau and other more terrible Revolutionists and, although his *Richard Coeur de Lion* was sternly prohibited during the Reign of Terror as savouring of Royalty, Grétry himself remained unscathed. The only music really inspired by the Revolution was the immortal *Marseillaise*, rivalled by Méhul's *Chant du Départ*.

Although Grétry was born in Belgium, he is so thoroughly French in language, style, temperament, that one must reckon him as belonging to the land which he adopted in his youth, whatever his ancestry may have been. In the words of a French critic,<sup>1</sup> "Whoever settles in a foreign land and produces creative work in the very spirit of that land, acquires by that fact alone the right of naturalisation." Besides, although Liège had come politically under the Holy Roman Empire, its inhabitants always remained intellectually and morally in sympathy with the Latin (Walloon) race in the Netherlands, and never became really a German province. Neither Teuton language nor Teuton culture ever took root there.

The Grétry family were settled in Liège when André Ernest Modeste (the second child) was born, 11 February, 1741. They have been traced originally to a village of the same name (Grétry), which the grandfather had left for another village (Blégny) near Liège, where he kept an inn. Music was already in the family, for this grandfather used to play for village dances and taught his children

1 M. Bourgault Ducoudray.

music. They formed, in fact, a little orchestra—greatly in request at weddings, dances and *fêtes* generally. François, the father of André, made music his profession and was very successful. He became first violin at the Church of St. Martin in Liège, gave lessons in the best families and married above his own station in life.

André was a delicate child of consumptive tendency, and life was not easy in those first years. His earliest remembrance was of a terrible accident by scalding, which injured his eyesight permanently. After a serious resultant illness he was sent to his grandmother's in the country, always a delightful memory of rustling trees and the music of a bubbling spring of water, which he loved.

But when still quite a child his father apprenticed him as choir boy<sup>1</sup> under a cruel master, and he suffered four or five years of misery. The master over-worked and ill-treated his pupils; "We were all wretched," says Grétry. The smallest fault in singing or unpunctuality in arriving was cruelly punished, and poor little Grétry was so afraid of being late that he would leave home at 3 a.m. in snowy weather and spend a couple of hours sitting on the steps of the church with a lantern to be in time for early mass, a forlorn little figure, half dead with cold and weariness. From this "misery of the inquisition," as he calls it, he was finally delivered by his timidity. He had a beautiful voice,

<sup>1</sup> Choir schools and monasteries were the only Schools of Music then.

but was too shy to sing solos well and the master dismissed him as "incapable."

Very fortunately an Italian Company were performing *Opera bouffe* in Liège just then, and Grétry played in their orchestra for a year. He also took singing lessons from some of these artists, and under the fine old Italian method improved wonderfully. He sang again in choirs and his beautiful voice was greatly admired, but he was forced to sing far too much before his voice broke. One day in an air by Galuppi, with very high notes, he suddenly broke down and began to spit blood. This was the end of Grétry's singing.

He always looked upon music as his vocation. At the time of his first communion, he prayed earnestly that he might either grow up to be "a good man and a great musician," or die. And on the very same day a beam of wood fell upon his head in the church belfry, stunning him. When he recovered consciousness his first words were: "Then I am to be a musician after all." He dreamed above all of dramatic music, for he adored Pergolesi's light opera, probably influenced by the Italian company of operatic singers, but also instinctively, in accordance with his own musical bent.

Then came a period of study: composition for a couple of years with Renekin, an organist, a splendid and enthusiastic teacher; afterwards with one Moreau, less inspiring. Before he was eighteen Grétry had composed six small "Symphonies" and a *Messe Solennelle*, which were well

received in Liège, then, as now, appreciative of musical talent. A certain Canon, delighted with the works, advised a visit to Rome, offering to defray the expenses of the journey. So in 1759 the youthful composer set out for Italy, a journey performed on foot and with haphazard companions. An old pedlar, who concealed his real business of smuggling under the pretence of conducting young students to Italy, acted as guide. A medical student and a delicate young Abbé were of the party, but the Abbé had to turn back after a few days on the road, footsore and worn out with fatigue. After various adventures the medical student and Grétry reached Rome, and both were received in the College liégeois, founded by a native of Liège for poor students. This was behind the Borghese Palace, and conducted by a priest very much on the lines of a *gratis* hostel, students being allowed full liberty in their choice of teachers, etc.

Here Grétry lived for seven years (1759-1766), studying hard all the time, unless interrupted by attacks of illness brought on by hard work. He loved Rome and in after years always advised young artists to spend some time there. He worked under several Roman teachers at the usual routine of fugues, counterpoint, imitations—drudgery which he detested.<sup>1</sup>

At this time there was a decided revolt of the younger generation against the strict rules of coun-

<sup>1</sup> Casali, *maitre de chapelle* at St. John Lateran, was his favourite teacher.

terpoint and Grétry felt that much of the teaching was simply wasted time. He was striving to find some new way of expression, even in Liège he had grown weary of the old contrapuntal style, but as yet he was too timid to strike out boldly and throw off conventional traditions. One can dimly feel what courage of conviction was needed, at that particular period of transition, for a young "modern" to declare and realise his aims, to throw overboard the cherished traditions of centuries. Voltaire had truly said that it took a whole generation for the ear to grow accustomed to new combinations of sound. Grétry speaks of his struggles between conventional ideals and the real rules governing art, of "the conflict between taste which chooses carefully and inexperience which does not know how to select." He had not yet realised what his own aims were. Again he was dismissed by one of his teachers as "ignorant and without promise."

No wonder that in later years Grétry warned young artists not to grow discouraged, "for you must travel round an immense circle of curious and incoherent ideas, ever recurring and ever rejected, before you finally perceive the truth you are seeking." Certainly he, as a young artist, had to wade through a mass of contradictions and prejudices before he realised himself and his genius. He loved melody and light opera, but disapproved of the frivolous style of Church music then in vogue. (Burney noted and condemned the use of the

Minuet form in Church music. Jigs, arias and dance tunes of all kinds were used in sacred services). The only music really liked and appreciated by Italian audiences was singing; for the eighteenth century was the period in which the human voice was cultivated to an extraordinary degree. At the opera people only listened to the phenomenal execution of celebrated singers; during the rest of the performance they talked, ate ices, visited each others' boxes, in order to escape boredom.

Grétry took his art very seriously and worked with his usual impetuosity until he brought on a dangerous attack of illness with fever and blood spitting. All his life he remained subject to those attacks and even in Rome he speaks of dieting himself carefully (he considered a diet of dried figs and water good for the chest).

After this illness he was sent to rest and recruit in a hermitage on Monte Mario. In these beautiful surroundings, in solitude and quiet, he grew calm and sure of himself. All at once inspiration came and he composed an air on words by Metastasio, charmed to find that at last he could express his ideas clearly and easily. "Never have I known a more delightful moment," he records.

Soon afterwards he was asked to write music for a two-act piece to be performed during Carnival, and composed *Les Vendangeuses* ("The Harvesters") within a week. It was a great success with public and critics alike. Piccinni congratulated

him on having struck out a new line. The students at the Collège liégeois celebrated their musician's triumph by a gala (1766).

There were flattering invitations to stay in Rome and compose operas. But Grétry was anxious to hear Opéra Comique in Geneva before going on to Paris, his ultimate goal. He felt that his talent lay in light opera. Besides, there was the opportunity of travelling in the *suite* of a certain English nobleman, a musical amateur especially devoted to the flute. (Grétry composed flute concertos for him and also had found a friend in the German flute professor attached to his service). Through this connection he obtained singing pupils in Geneva immediately on arrival and independence was assured. He visited Voltaire, who was living in Geneva at that time, and asked him for a libretto, which however Voltaire refused to undertake. But he welcomed the young man, cordially clasping his hand at their first meeting ("it was my heart he clasped," says the impressionable youth), and was very friendly.

Voltaire was astonished to find so much "ordinary intelligence and such a sense of humour in a mere musician." Evidently Grétry was able to hold his own with the great man. They discussed many things, among others the question, which had been raised lately by the Encyclopædists, of the treatment of the *e* mute in terminations, e.g., in such words as "philosophe." Grétry



thought it should be considered a syllable and have a note of music, whilst Voltaire advised him to keep the *e* mute ("philosoph").

In Geneva Grétry stayed six months and composed *Isabelle et Gertrude* on an old libretto (it was a custom of the day for more than one composer to use the same libretto). This was fairly successful, but Voltaire strongly advised him to go to Paris and seek "immortalité," and in Paris he arrived in the summer of 1767.

Rameau had died three years before and no one had as yet taken his place. At the opera portions of old operas and ballets filled the bills, the singing was quite in the old artificial style. Grétry was disappointed, and disappointed besides in Rameau's music, which seemed to him old-fashioned, out-of-date; but he found some brilliant actors at the Comédie Italienne (Madame Favart, Monsieur Clairval, etc.). And he had the great good fortune to find a friend in the Swedish Ambassador, the Comte de Creutz, a most enthusiastic music-lover.

Creutz became his devoted friend and it was largely owing to his influence and support that Grétry succeeded so soon in making a name. At his house the unknown young musician met the most intellectual and artistic persons: Suard, the Abbé Arnaud, Vernet the painter, and delighted them by his playing on the harpsichord. It was the custom to have music after dinner and Grétry



often played his latest compositions to these appreciative listeners. Among other things in those early days, he played the score of an opera, *Les Mariages Samnites* (libretto by an amateur named Légier). This was performed at the Prince de Conti's but, partly owing to the libretto, was a decided failure. Grétry had now no money left (he had copied the score himself, being too poor to pay for it), criticism was entirely unfavourable, and in his youthful despair he thought seriously of suicide. Creutz, however, acted as guardian angel and persuaded the well-known librettist Marmontel to write a "poem" for him; this time all went well.

*Le Huron* (on an episode from Voltaire's *L'Ingénu*) was performed 20 August 1768, the music being pronounced "charming, natural, sincere," in fact all the criticisms were favourable. Grétry had won fame. Grimm said the success of the opera was entirely due to the music, which was "purely Italian in style, the harmony not too heavy and full" (this was certainly never Grétry's fault). Certain airs caught on and became famous, such as "Dans quel canton est l'Huronie?" The march at the end of Act I. was taken from the unsuccessful *Mariages Samnites*.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The score of this opera shows five first and five second violins, two violas, three 'cellos, two contrabassi, two bassoons, two horns, kettledrum, two oboes and two flutes. But as only two artists were provided for these last instruments they always had to be divided into one flute and one oboe, or two flutes etc., never all four together.

This opera, called *Opus 1* (*comédie* in two acts) was dedicated to Count Creutz.<sup>1</sup>

Five months after *Huron* appeared *Lucile*, a one-act opera which scored a tremendous success (5 January 1769), *libretto* again by Marmontel. This opera appealed to popular taste, at that time all for sentiment and sensibility. Rousseau and Diderot wrote, whilst Greuze painted, the charms of Innocence, Simplicity, the Domestic Virtues. Audiences enjoyed shedding facile tears ; it was the fashion to be easily moved. *Lucile* is on these lines of simple domestic sentiment.

The idyllic plot resembles the story of "Lord Ronald and Lady Clare." *Lucile*, betrothed to Dorval, finds out that she is not the daughter of the rich Timante, but of Blaise the peasant. She prepares to renounce Dorval, but he will not part from her and his father also generously consents to their union. An "enthusiasm of kindness and virtue," commented the *Mercure*, whilst the music became popular at once. The quartette: "Où peut-on être mieux qu'au sein de la famille?" ("Where is one happier than in the bosom of one's family?"), had a long run of favour, it became in fact a kind of household word and was often played with ludicrous effect. The soldiers of the Republic sang it later on all possible oc-

<sup>1</sup> It is remarkable that *le Huron* was performed in his native town of Liège in January, 1769, only six months after Paris, and the city Magistrates invited Madame Grétry, his mother, to their box. This points to an extraordinary success in those days of slow communication.

casions, when escorting prisoners, for instance, or on taking possession of a city. Even during the terrible retreat from Russia a special guard once surrounded Napoleon at a dangerous moment, playing the familiar air. There is a legend that this air, so often heard in times of storm and stress, was actually sung in church in 1825 to other words, expressive of the happiness of the elect in Heaven!

*Lucile* was all domestic sentiment, but in his next work, *Le Tableau Parlant*, Grétry showed that he could write gay bright music which surprised everyone by its sparkle. This work, composed very quickly on a libretto by Marmontel, was performed 20th September, 1769. Critics compared him with Pergolesi. With this work he became "the father of French light opera."

Grétry had by this solved the question of the *e* mute, which he had discussed with Voltaire, and in this opera he definitely assigns a note to it. ("Je suis jeune, je suis fille"). His music was full of amusing imitations and descriptions, such as a passage in the bass indicating the tottering walk of an old man or the heroine's mimicry of her guardian. The work made him famous. When Burney visited Paris in 1770 he found Grétry the most fashionable composer of comic opera, the idol of the public. Selections from his works were performed at most public receptions and his score was found on every harpsichord. At this time he was only twenty-eight years of age. There is a

charming portrait of him by Madame Vigée le Brun: a refined, delicate face with regular features, too feminine to be called handsome, but decidedly good looking, the expression dreamy, sensitive, amiable—"un garçon charmant" in the costume of his day, with an air of distinction and elegance. He was delighted to know that he resembled Pergolesi, who was also pale, delicate and of consumptive tendency.

"Let him try to live, if possible," said Grimm, after discovering that Grétry was a genius. And after all this frail being, in spite of ill-health and many trials, attained the ripe age of seventy-two.

Although of humble origin, Grétry's wit, intelligence and charming manners made him at home in grand *salons*. He enjoyed the life of a fashionable artist, in summer invited to aristocratic *châteaux*, in winter to dinners and receptions in town. He made friends among the noted artists, whilst the Encyclopædists, who had fought Rameau, took him under their wing. Diderot was especially friendly to him. At the Abbé Morellet's first Sundays in the month there was always music with the best singers; Philidor,<sup>1</sup> Caillot, Hulmandel the claveciniste, d'Alembert came and Mlle de L'Espinasse, de la Harpe, Mme Vigée le Brun. But Creutz remained his most devoted friend, whose admiration for the young genius was described as almost a "culte religieux." He would sit for

1 Director of *Concerts spirituels* and operatic composer  
(*Le Sorcier*).

hours in silence, happy to watch him at work and carefully made notes of all words of praise uttered in his honour. If an idea occurred to Grétry, Creutz would hand him paper and pencil and urge him to jot it down at once.

*Silvain* (libretto by Marmontel) was Grétry's next opera, performed 19th February 1770. It was on the domestic sentimental lines of "Lucile," part of the music being again drawn from the unsuccessful *Mariages Samnites*. Another lyric of family affection "Dans le sein d'un père" again pleased popular taste and became celebrated, "almost a classic." The conjugal love of Hélène and Silvain was a theme pleasing to disciples of the Return to Nature and Simple Life school of those days.

On the other hand some rather revolutionary lines displeased the nobles. There was a certain reference to the freedom of hunting, for instance, and lines expressing the beauty of virtue as compared with noble blood,

"Il est bon de montrer quelquefois que la  
simple vertu tient lieu de naissance,"

were not pleasing to aristocratic ears.

At this time Grétry was in love with a young girl named Jeanne Marie Grandon, the daughter of a poor widow in Lyons. She seems to have been alone in Paris earning her living and occupying a room in the house where Grétry lodged. Her father had been an artist, the master of

Greuze. For some time her mother refused to permit the marriage, but finally (November 1770), signed a deed in presence of a notary at Lyons, in which she gave her full consent. Jeanne Marie had nursed Grétry through a severe illness and their marriage took place 3rd July 1771, he being thirty and his wife twenty-four.

Grétry's own mother, now a widow, had come to visit him during his illness and she remained in Paris, living with the young couple for many years, until her death in 1801. Grétry settled a pension of 400 livres a year upon her at the time of his marriage.

In 1770 the marriage of Marie Antoinette with the Dauphin was celebrated. Marmontel was asked by the Duc d'Aumont to write an opera for it with Grétry as composer. Unfortunately Marmontel's libretto, *Zémire et Azor*, so greatly resembled the plot of "La Belle et la Bête" that the Duc d'Aumont feared "the possibility of an epigram." Marmontel had nothing else ready, but, as something had to be produced, Grétry composed two shorter operas, *Les deux Avides* and *Amitié à l'Épreuve* (by unknown librettists) and these, with *Le Tableau Parlant*, were performed at Fontainebleau in October and November.

Grétry was ill at the time and wrote the chorus of Janissaries in the first act of *Les deux Avides* after a night of delirium, during which the music rang in his head until it became a torturing obsession.

The plot and words of these operas are poor, but some of the music is charming. The duet of the two misers, Martin and Gripon, is characteristic<sup>1</sup> and there is some clever descriptive music, for instance, the scratching of a mouse, or when Jerome descends into a well, the violin imitates the cord and the wheel unwinding it, etc. The short march (sung in chorus), "La garde passe, il est minuit," became popular and was used as regimental music, although really not at all martial in character. Grétry received 4,500 livres for this work.

The dauphin hated music and was at no pains to conceal the fact. (He was known to remark after a musical *fête*, "Now the music is over, we can enjoy ourselves"). But Marie Antoinette, devoted to music, was delighted with Grétry's opera. There was even a Royal summons for the composer to appear at Court, and the invalid left his sick bed to obey the command. His reception was not encouraging, the King merely remarking drily that M. Grétry looked very ill.

*Zémire et Asor*, composed meantime, was produced (8th November 1771) at Fontainebleau and a month later in Paris. People insisted on calling it "La Belle et la Bête," (and it undoubtedly is "Beauty and the Beast"), but there was at this moment no royal marriage to furnish the possibility of an "epigram" and Marie Antoinette expressed herself charmed, delighted, she had dreamt of

1 "Nièces, neveux, race haïssable" has an angry, impatient accompaniment expressing the sentiment.



the music. Grétry had dedicated the opera to Madame du Barry and received a pension for it. All the honours of this piece went to the composer. Poor Marmontel, who always fancied that his *libretti* were far superior to Grétry's music, was deeply mortified. Nothing could convince him that he was not the principal collaborator in their productions and when Grétry's music proved to be the real attraction, his jealousy knew no bounds. Marmontel's fatuous belief in his own superior talent is very evident in his complacent version of the success of *Zémire et Azor*:

"I do not deny that the charm of the music contributed wonderfully to such effects. Grétry's in this case was, in my opinion, better than usual; but he never sufficiently appreciated the pains I took to indicate for him the lines and character of easy and pleasing melody. Most musicians are foolish enough to believe they owe nothing to their poet; and Grétry, who was intelligent in other respects, possessed this weakness in a supreme degree."

Next day the guard presented arms to the composer in one of the corridors of the palace at Fontainebleau, and when Grétry said he was mistaking him for a personage of distinction, the soldier replied:

"I heard *Zémire et Azor* yesterday." Grétry was delighted with this spontaneous homage, which he records in his *Memoirs*.

The opera, in four acts, described as a "Comédie



ballet en vers," was, in fact, founded on the old fairy tale. Azor was, however, not intended by Marmontel to be an animal, and he was horrified (as was also the singer) by the costume designed by the tailor for the part. It was hastily altered under Marmontel's personal supervision into an elegant costume with a cloak of purple satin and a mask.

*Zémire* remains one of Grétry's famous compositions. The *Mercure* praised the trio *en sourdine* of the father and two daughters, who appear in a magic picture (for which Marmontel ordered two ells of silver moire and two ells of fine gauze, as appears in items of theatrical expense). The air for the slave is a good example of Grétry's musical jokes. The slave assures his master that the storm is over, in order to get him away from Azor's mysterious palace. "Already the winds are at rest, the storm is over," he sings, whilst the orchestra breaks out with fresh violence to show that the storm is still raging. Grétry made the slave yawn so realistically that the audience yawned too, a device condemned as beyond the legitimate province of music. When the father bewails the absence of *Zémire* "mysterious music" is heard, produced by two horns, two clarionets and two bassoons behind the scenes.

Like Rameau, Grétry aimed at "La Vérité dans la déclamation." Whilst writing the father's song he declared he had twice tried in vain to express the words naturally and, on shewing his airs to Diderot, he too found the music unsatisfactory. Diderot

recited the words aloud and Grétry then wrote the song according to Diderot's inflections. The result was a complete success. But Grétry admits that this method would not succeed in every case. "Only the spontaneous inspiration of a man like Diderot could give worthy expression."

Marmontel and Grétry now revised *L'ami de la Maison* and it was performed successfully at the Comédie Italienne in May, 1772.

Grétry about this time found a more sympathetic librettist in Sedaine, who provided him with *le Magnifique*, founded on a story by La Fontaine. This Opera Comique in three acts (Paris, 4 March, 1773) was not a brilliant success, but enjoyed rather a long run in spite of intrigues against it by Marmontel and his friends, furious at Grétry's preference of Sedaine. The only really interesting scene is one known as that of the Rose, in which Grétry finds opportunity for delicate shades of emotion. The heroine, Clémentine, has a scene with her lover, but is forbidden to speak to him, her guardian being present to watch the lovers. The pleading of the lover, the triumph of the guardian and Clémentine's emotions are variously expressed by the music. Finally she drops a rose, a token to her lover, without speaking.

*La Fausse Magie*, Marmontel's libretto (1 March 1775), contained a few charming airs and some curious descriptive music. It pleased the public and its success was durable, for it was performed at intervals during a period of nearly twenty years.

It was again the music rather than the stupid plot which made the work successful, and Grétry thought the first act on the whole the best among his works. It was after this opera that Grétry met Rousseau, whom he had long admired from afar. Rousseau was delighted with his music and the two started to walk home together after the performance, conversing amicably. But when they came to some *débris* of building materials, Grétry offered to help the philosopher over the rough places. To his surprise Rousseau pushed him away in a sudden fit of irritability, saying, "Let me do it by myself." They continued the walk in silence, then separated, and never met again.

*La Rosière de Salency*, a pastoral, was performed uneventfully at Fontainebleau (1773); and at Versailles at the close of the same year, in honour of the marriage of the Comte d'Artois, Louis XV's grandson, *Céphale et Procris*. This time MarmonTEL was again in collaboration with Grétry and, as usual, sure that his *libretto* was a masterpiece. But neither words nor music pleased the public, although the music was pronounced by a noted singer (Mlle Sophie Arnould, who sang Procris at its first performance) "more French than the words." As for the words, their banality may be gauged by Céphale's apology for having killed Procris :

Pardonne, hélas ! pardonne  
A l'erreur de ma main.

To which Procris replies :

Tu m'aimais, je pardonne  
A l'erreur de ta main.

Only one performance of this took place at Versailles (30 Dec. 1773). There was much adverse criticism of the music. La Harpe pronounced it feeble. Mlle. de Lespinasse, who had been so enthusiastic over Grétry's previous works, thought it "rather anæmic" and said Grétry should always keep to his pleasing, sensitive, "spirituel" style, and not attempt more. Some of his best airs, however, are in this opera, the duet in Act I and the chorus in Act III.

The story is based on the legend of Cephalus and Procris, but in the opera Procris, after being slain by her lover, is brought to life again by Amor, who descends from the clouds for the purpose.

At this impressive moment a "celestial symphony" is heard (consisting of four common chords), the terrified demons remain "*en attitude* on the crescendo note" (the G minor chord), then rush away in scale passages (*presto*).

The orchestra, a typical one, consists of kettle-drum, trumpet, horns, oboes and flutes, clarinets, violins, violas, 'cello, bassoon.

Gluck was now in Paris, and his stronger genius became a touchstone on which those of lesser calibre were tried and found wanting. Already comparisons were made between him and Grétry. It was unfortunate for Grétry at this time of transition,

when people were vaguely yearning for some newer and truer expression in art as in life, that the singers still kept to their absurd conventional costumes and manner of singing. They were given to loud outbursts followed by trivial little roulades and all sorts of ornamentation (so detested by Lully), and paid no attention to the conductor, being loftily independent of time. Gluck had great difficulty in reforming this state of things, but his strong will prevailed.

In his memoirs Grétry gives an amusing account of the pretensions of singers at the opera.

It was a recognised state of things that, excepting for dances and chorus, there should be no insistence on strict time at the opera. At the rehearsal of *Céphale et Procris* Mlle. Levasseur, the *prima donna*, attacked Francœur, the conductor.

"What is the meaning of this? Your orchestra seems to be in a state of rebellion."

"Rebellion, mademoiselle, how so? We are all here to serve the king and we serve him zealously."

"I should wish to serve him too, but your orchestra interrupts me and prevents my singing."

"Yet, mademoiselle, we are keeping time."

"Time! What nonsense is that? Take your time from me, sir, and know that your symphony is the very humble servant of the artiste who recites."

"When you recite, I follow you, mademoiselle, but you are now singing an air in time, very strict time."

“ Enough of this nonsense, take your time from me.”

No wonder Grétry complained of the constant “ syncopations ” introduced by singers of both sexes in his melodies.

Grétry now produced his early opera *Les mariages Samnites* with some new material (12 June 1776). Marie Antoinette attended the first performance, but it was only a mediocre success, a fate shared by several of his works during the next couple of years. In other countries his operas were going the rounds,—in Germany, Sweden, Italy, Russia, Holland, Flanders. But in Paris Gluck’s operas took first place and Grétry found his *Céphale* only billed on Sundays, then, as now, the *bourgeois* holiday when people of quality stayed at home.

In 1778 fortune smiled again, the result of collaboration with a more original poet. It was a young Englishman named Hale,<sup>1</sup> who wrote the clever libretto of a different style from anything Grétry had yet composed. *Le jugement de Midas* scored a success, first at court and afterwards in Paris. In this work Grétry cleverly parodies old French music: Pan represents the vulgar old-fashioned Vaudeville, whilst Marsyas stands for classic Grand Opera. There are curious and interesting descriptive episodes. The Overture (programme music) depicts “ the silent sound which heralds dawn,” followed by a realistic storm; “ Apollo falls from heaven.”

1 Known in France as Hèles.

*Les fausses Apparences ou l'Amant jaloux* (also by Hale) was another success both at Versailles (20 November) and at Paris (23 December, 1778). La Harpe placed it in the first rank of French *Opéra Comique* of the eighteenth century. Yet only the Serenade of the second Act (for two violins, two mandolines and 'cello) is at all known now. Mozart admired and even imitated this work. He heard Grétry's operas when he visited Paris, bought the score and studied them attentively.

It was unfortunate that Hale died young, much to Grétry's regret. Their last collaboration was in *Les évènements imprévus*, in the style of Italian comedies of intrigue, which offered Grétry the opportunities he loved of depicting conflicting sentiments. This was performed at Versailles 11 November 1779, and in Paris two days later.

Several smaller works followed with no great success. It was the time of the war of Gluckistes *versus* Piccinnistes. Grétry knew he could not hope to rival Gluck, yet he thought that on his own lines of "sensibility" he might hold his own. Somewhat unwisely, he refused to welcome Piccinni when that master came to Paris, and naturally this offended the Piccinnistes, who more than once hissed his operas. *Colinette à la Cour ou la Double Épreuve* (libretto by Lourdes de Santerre) was popular (1 Jan. 1782). It was a pastoral with pretty dances and chorus and some of Grétry's fresh, spontaneous melodies.



*La Caravane du Caire*<sup>1</sup> a spectacular production with Egyptian colouring, then a novelty, achieved a popular success in Paris (15 January 1784). The Gluckistes approved of it, whilst the Piccinnistes behaved so badly at one performance that they had to be ejected. Within a fortnight the opera was parodied—sufficient proof of its success.<sup>2</sup> The “Opéra ballet” with its Oriental scenery (a bazaar scene was a picturesque novelty) contained some original music, two airs for bass being especial favourites. *The Caravane* held its own on the French stage for a long time, five hundred and six performances being given down to 1829, and Grétry made a fortune from this work.

*Panurge dans l'île des Lanternes* (25 January 1785) was condemned for its *libretto* (taken from Rabelais), although the music ranks among Grétry's best. The great Vestris saved it by his dancing. Grétry, by the way, made a curious innovation by repeating the overture at the end of the opera and having it danced.

About this time the Operatic Committee awarded a pension of 3,000 livres to composers of six great works. Grétry received 2,000 livres for five masterpieces (among which were counted *Zémire, ColINETTE, La Caravane* and *Panurge*), another 1,000 was promised when he should complete another work.

1 The “book” was by the Comte de Provence, afterwards Louis XVIII.

2 In the parody Florestan, the father, arrives in a balloon to rescue his son, a topical allusion to the balloon experiments then being carried out in France.



At this time Grétry was at the height of his fame and fortune. Besides revenues from his works he enjoyed several pensions (one granted by Louis XV and increased by Louis XVI, and one from the Opera); he held various posts, such as Inspecteur de la Comédie italienne and a sinecure, created expressly for him, Censeur royale de la musique. This was a court appointment, he had refused others on account of his delicate health. A street in Paris bore his name. His works were almost daily on the repertoire, and he might be seen nearly every evening in the box which the Comédie italienne had presented to the Grétry family. At this time he was living in the rue Poissonnière.

At the age of forty-five Grétry had composed some twenty-five operas, most of which had been successful. His home life with a devoted wife and three charming daughters was happy, his circle of friends included all the noted men and women of Paris. He was fond of spending the summer in a small house at Auteuil, the summer suited him and was "good for composing," he said. Undeniably he composed too much and with too great facility. It is curious that Marie Antoinette, always a friend of Grétry, was really growing a trifle weary of his music and was frankly bored by his *Epreuve villageoise* (performed at Court 24 June 1784). She tried to conceal the fact, but it could not escape the sensitive Grétry and, whether from pique or policy, he took care not to force his music upon her. He went less frequently to Court

(where his presence was required as director of the Queen's private concerts). Marie Antoinette noticed his absence and reproached him.

"I ventured to tell her that, as I was tired of my own music, she must certainly have had enough of it and I praised the 'Bouffons italiens,' whom she favoured just then. . . . She saw I understood and remained kindly disposed towards me—at a distance—but she would soon have disliked me if I had insisted on trying to please her."

Thus Grétry—as an accomplished courtier and man of the world. He kept the Queen's friendship and she was always particularly fond of his third daughter, Marie Antoinette, her godchild. On entering her box at the opera, after bowing to the audience the three times prescribed by etiquette, the Queen's eyes always sought her goddaughter and she would smile and blow a kiss to the young girl, to the delight of the spectators.

The tragedy of Grétry's life was the loss of his three daughters, one after another, each one as she reached womanhood.

Jeanne, called familiarly Jenny, the eldest, quiet and nun-like, died of decline when she was sixteen (about 1787). Lucile Dorothée, the second, full of life and restless energy, the image of her father, had unusual musical talent and composed a little opera, when she was only fourteen ("Le mariage d'Antonio," performed in 1786, retouched and orchestrated by Grétry). Unfortunately she died, as her sister had done, in the spring of 1790.

She had married early and her marriage was an unhappy one. Her husband treated her badly and her parents were doubly wretched, knowing this and unable to help her.

There remained only Marie Antoinette, the Queen's goddaughter, prettiest and youngest of the sisters. She was betrothed when quite young,<sup>1</sup> but after a boating accident in which she and her father were nearly drowned, she developed the same fatal illness and died as her sisters had done. Grétry was composing *Guillaume Tell* at the time and, to please her, his spinet was placed near her bed, so that she could watch him at work, "At last," he says, "she closed her beautiful eyes and went to her sisters."

The parents were heart-broken. Grétry describes how they tried to comfort each other, the wife forcing herself to take an interest in her painting (she had some artistic talent), Grétry busy with his music which, he sadly says, could not console him for the loss of his dear ones. Fame was but an empty name compared with the "real happiness" of family affection. They could not bear to stay in the house where they had lived with their children and removed to the Boulevard des Italiens.

*Richard Cœur de Lion*, by some critics considered Grétry's finest work, was performed in October 1784. The libretto by Sedaine was on the story of Richard I. and his minstrel Blondel. This

1 To Bouilly, the young poet, librettist of "Pierre le Grand," etc.

was perhaps Grétry's culminating success, although at its first representation the public was not satisfied with the *dénouement*, which was altered and in part re-written. For the air, "O Richard, O mon roi!" Grétry had ransacked old music to find a suitable style, which should at the same time please modern taste. He produced one which became very popular, so much so that during the Revolution it was forbidden as savouring too much of royalist sentiments.

Grétry wrote one more opera founded on royal traditions: *Pierre le Grand* (libretto by Bouilly), produced 13 January 1790, at the Théâtre Italien. This was the last opera of monarchical tendency before the Revolution. It contained flattering allusions to Louis XVI, which were enthusiastically received by the audience. Necker was recognised in Lefort, the friend and counsellor of Peter the Great, and Mme. de Staël personally thanked composer and librettist for their work.

But *Guillaume Tell* (Sedaine) was more appropriate to the times. It appeared 9th April, 1791 (not long after the death of Grétry's youngest daughter), and was a popular success, "breathing" (said the *Journal de Paris*), "hatred of oppression and love of liberty." Meantime the day of the Revolution had dawned. The theatres were closed one evening<sup>1</sup> by angry crowds because Necker was banished, then came the taking of the Bastille and ten days later the opera re-opened with benefit

<sup>1</sup> 12 July, 1789—Grétry's *Aspasie* was to be performed at 5 p.m.

performances (*Panurge*) "in aid of the workmen who had fought for Liberty and la Patrie" (21st, 26th and 29th July, 1789).

A couple of unsuccessful operas and a "Romance of the Willow," written for the tragedy of *Otello*, bring Grétry's works down to November, 1792. The Romance was very popular and was subsequently arranged for voice accompanied by guitar, harp or harpsichord, published by "citizen Grétry."

In February of that year, however, the opera *Richard Cœur de Lion* had been forbidden, so was *Pierre le Grand*, and any theatre producing works "calculated to revive the superstition of royalty" was closed, "the directors to be punished with the utmost rigour of the law."

In Grétry's *Memoirs* he mentions an instance of the fanatical hatred of that "superstition." An unfortunate parrot had his neck wrung for singing "Richard, O mon roi," an air he had learnt in days when there was still a king in France. Patriots burned the score of *Richard* in a café. "I heard the following at a sitting of the National Convention: 'You say, Citizen, that this man is not an aristocrat! And yet he was heard singing that infamous air, "O Richard!"'" Strange to say, the composer himself was not attacked, but he was ordered to write music for the infamous "Fête de la Raison" (a one-act piece, words by Silvain Maréchal). This was composed in 1793, but was not performed until 2nd September 1794

(16 Fructidor, An II. of the Republic). Certain scenes in this work were forbidden by the Censor on the ground of impropriety and its name was altered to *La Rosière Republicaine*. The original scenes must have been of extraordinarily degrading character to be condemned at this period of license and the work as it actually appeared has been described as "a nameless insult to the Catholic religion." Women are represented falling asleep as they recite their *Ave Maria* at the church doors; then the scene changes and the Goddess of Reason appears on an altar; a curé tears up his breviary and dons the Red Cap, nuns join in a frenzied dance. . . . To such compositions was Citoyen Grétry reduced. His Memoirs say very little about his share in such works, nor is it clear how he escaped suspicion when some of his operas were considered so dangerous. His reputation as a musician would not have saved him, but his former known sympathy with the Encyclopædists, his friendship with Diderot, D'Alembert, Voltaire, may have kept him secure. Of course he lost his position, his pensions and other sources of income. For a time none of his operas were performed, he was neglected in favour of newer and more forceful composers, Méhul and Cherubini for instance. He was certainly reduced to poverty. There exists a little book in his handwriting which shows this convincingly enough. He sold jewels, trinkets, a piano, "to live and pay some debts," whilst his wife tried to earn money by painting. This was



in the second year of the Republic. Yet the government seems to have had a great respect for Grétry's talent. When the Conservatoire de Musique was founded, he was appointed "Inspecteur des Etudes" (Director of Studies), with Gossec, Méhul, Lesueur and Cherubini.<sup>1</sup> Also he was one of the three chosen to represent music at the Institut de France, with Gossec and Méhul. This was in 1795. But his health was now too delicate for any active work, and he resigned the former post in the following year, retiring to L'Ermitage at Montmorency, once the home of J. J. Rousseau, where he spent the remainder of his life.

Napoleon made him member of the Legion of Honour (19th May, 1802), granted him a pension to make up what he had lost, and spoke in flattering terms of his music in a personal interview.

Grétry certainly had to write to order during the Revolution. He says: "I wrote *Guillaume Tell* at Sedaine's request; my other works, such as *Barra*, which was performed at the *Italiens*, *la Rosière Républicaine* and *Denis le Tyran* at the Opera, were "commanded" by the terrible tyrants

<sup>1</sup> Gossec had founded an "Ecole de declamation et de Chant" in 1784, and Sarette (originally a Captain of the Guard) set up a School for Military Music, in which bandsmen were trained for the army (1790). From these beginnings came the "Institut National de Musique" (1793), changed to "Conservatoire de Musique" (1795). Some 600 students, male and female, came from all parts at once. The instruction was always gratis. Sarette was the first director.

of those days. Another revolutionary drama, whose title I forget,<sup>1</sup> was set to music in two days by all the composers in Paris. The terrible committee of Public Safety commanded the performers; all the numbers intended for singing were put into one red cap, the names of the composers into another, then the scrutineers decided which piece each one was to compose during the day.

"This musical medley was not a success. An extraordinary effect was produced at the first performance. The overture had been assigned to Blasius, first violin of the opera and a good composer. My air, 'O Richard, O mon roi,' as is well known, was forbidden during the Revolution, it became a death song for him who dared to sing it. . . . The overture of Blasius commenced with this very air. A shudder went through the audience, who rose with one accord on hearing these unexpected strains; the orchestra stopped, there was an alarming silence, until the music continued with the refrain of the Marseillaise, 'Qu'un sang impur arrose nos sillons.' Then came a burst of applause as the composer's intention was revealed."

He goes on to say that music can only flourish in peaceful times. "Music had its cradle in the time of Lulli. Gluck and I (I venture to think) furthered its progress because we were dramatic. . . . Generally speaking, my music was thrown aside during the Revolution; the sentiments ex-

2 *Le Congrès des Rois.*



pressed by it were too moderate; it was not in harmony with the unrest in men's minds; besides, the life of ancient times depicted in my poems was forbidden. I have my revenge to-day (year XIII., 1805); my works are revived with success."

*La Rosière Republicaine*, The Planting of the Tree of Liberty, was a piece in one act, the poem by Mahéault, clearly an "occasional" work. It is impossible that Grétry contributed willingly to such compositions, but, had he refused, he would have been "suspect" and not even his genius could have saved him. Although he makes only slight allusions to these productions, he is careful to point out that among his collaborators were such famous men as Méhul, Cherubini, Kreutzer, Delayrac, Solié, Catel, Berton, Devienne, Jadin, Blasius and Deshayes. All these names were drawn from the red cap to assist in the *Congrès des Rois*, a production offered *gratis* by the Government to the good citizens of Paris February 26th 1794. It is described as a set of caricatures without rhyme or reason, ending in a *Carmagnole* danced by red-capped kings.

Grétry's other quite numerous works during the Reign of Terror (1792-1796) were not successful or important. The operas were all failures—most of them unpublished. *Joseph Barra*, one of these, contained little of interest, "only one chorus, new and pleasing—too little for Grétry," was the admonishing comment of the *Decade Philosophique*.

*Callias ou Amour et Patrie*, libretto by Hoffmann on a Greek subject, obtained a short success. The

sacrifice of a son by his father to save their country was certainly a more dignified theme than other works of this period. It was coupled on the bills with a *Hymne à l'Eternel*, "with guitar accompaniment" (19th September 1794).

*Anacréon* (1797) was the best of his later works—Grétry's swan song.

Grétry's pictures of those days are unforgettable. Chronicled in the simplest language, they give vivid, indelible impressions. The alarm bell haunted him sleeping and waking. Past his windows defiled the procession conveying Louis XVI to the guillotine (to a terrible march in 6/8 time, played in a curious, uneven rhythm by the soldiers). And there is his well-known description of the evening when, returning from a walk to the Champs Elysées to see an unusually beautiful lilac-bush in bloom, he came to the Place de la Republique and heard music and dancing, whilst beyond and above the merry-makers loomed the ominous guillotine, the dread knife rising and falling a dozen times without pause. Filled with horror, Grétry hurried down a side street, only to meet the cart conveying the headless corpses through noisy crowds. "Peace, citizens," the driver said, laughing, "they sleep!"

In his later years Grétry turned from music to literature in a curious way. He had begun to write his *Essais* before the revolution broke out and continued writing to the end of his life. He neither understood nor liked the new school of music which

was now being recognised; it was stronger, with richer harmony and fuller instrumentation than the old. Grétry was now decidedly of the old school and recognised that he could not go with the times.<sup>1</sup> Since the loss of his daughters, his genius had seemed shattered, and as years went on he actually lost interest in music.

“I say frankly, whether it is because I am older, or because republics are not favourable to illusions, music interests me less to-day than formerly. The language of music seems to me too vague; now that I am on the threshold of old age I want something more positive. Men of all ages are fascinated by the arts, but the creation of works of genius is only proper to the years when imagination and its sweet illusions are in full force. It is time for me to retire and take philosophy or reason, which are one and the same thing, for my portion.”

“Melodies come to an end like everything else; I will not wait until there is nothing left in my wallet.”

All his life Grétry was intelligently interested in art, philosophy, politics; he had learnt much from the Encyclopædists. The first volume of his *Memoirs or Essays on music* appeared in 1789 and contained many personal reminiscences; it was

1 “My colleagues agree with me that the harmony of to-day is terribly complicated. Singers and instrumentalists are too rapid, they spoil music. We are in fact on the verge of chaos.” Music was also too loud, “since the taking of the Bastille, French music is all cannon-firing.”

reprinted with additions in 1797 at the expense of the State. Evidently the republican government attached importance to Grétry's writings.

Four years later appeared his *La Vérité*—"Truth, what we were, what we are, what we ought to be," in which Citoyen Grétry rather vaunts his republican sentiments. He disapproves of the Reign of Terror, however (by this time it was safe to do so), and preaches moderation, tolerance, unity among nations and all other virtues. It is idle to speculate as to Grétry's real sentiments regarding royalty or republicanism. He lived under both systems and under neither dared he express himself with absolute frankness. Probably he remained true to himself all through, a man of moderate opinions who only wished to live and work in peace.

With the exception of two or three unimportant operas, with only mediocre success, the occupation of Grétry's last years was literature. He left eight volumes entitled *Reflexions d'un solitaire*, some of which have never been published.

He had bought the Ermitage near Montmorency, the home of Jean Jacques Rousseau, and here his last years were spent. Many of the friends of former days were dead—Vernet, Marmontel, Sedaine, Favart, d'Alembert, Greuze—but a new circle formed around the celebrated old composer. Among these came Rouget de Lisle, David the painter, Delayrac, Boieldieu, who lived near Montmorency, Bouilly (to whom his youngest daughter had been betrothed) and others.

Grétry's wife died 1807 and after her death he composed only a few notes.

In August, 1813, he became ill during a visit to Paris and hastened back to die at his beloved Ermitage. His old attacks of hemorrhage came on violently and he died, 24th September 1813, in the arms of his nephew, at the age of 72 years and a half.<sup>1</sup>

Paris gave him a magnificent funeral, at which Méhul pronounced the oration. All the musicians came to take part in the procession and do him honour, silent crowds lined the streets as the *cortège* passed to Père la Chaise. His operas were performed at the theatres for several days to the exclusion of all others.

Weber's criticism of Grétry is worth recording. He wrote in 1817: "Grétry is perhaps the only one among French composers whose spirit is essentially lyric, at times even romantic. It would be impossible to equal the really exquisite purity of his melodies, which are always inspired to suit the exigencies of the moment and not according to stereotyped forms."

Lully and Rameau had sought the true expression of emotion in *recitative*. Grétry sought it in melody. "The most skilful musician is he who can best transform declamation into melody." He

<sup>1</sup> Grétry had generously provided for the seven children left by his elder brother. A niece married one Flamand (he took the name of Flamand Grétry) who had an unseemly lawsuit with the town of Liège for the possession of Grétry's heart.

thought "spoken words are sound in which song is enclosed," and "vocal music is never good unless it copies the accents of the spoken word; without this it is only a symphony." He tried to copy spoken accents in his music, noted tones, inflections, modulations of voice, etc., sometimes, in his efforts after strict truthfulness, becoming trivial and mechanical. Strange irony of fate, Méhul declared that Grétry, writing on the system "*La vérité dans la déclamation*" wrote very well, but it was not music!

But his ideal of melody was really higher than this. "The melody which lingers in one's mind like beautiful poetry bears the mark of genius. All other music, however well written, is only a good arrangement of notes."

He knew his own limitations. "I received from Nature the gift of appropriate melody, but she denied me that of strict and complicated harmony."

The Great Composer, he felt, would be he who should write melody and harmony in equal measure. "But it is very difficult to find such a one!"

His admiration of Haydn was unbounded; Haydn's music he considered an inexhaustible treasury of melodic themes. Mozart admired Grétry, but Grétry does not seem to have recognised Mozart's genius.<sup>1</sup>

He took a great interest in young composers,

<sup>1</sup> He criticised Mozart as "placing his pedestal on the stage and his statue in the orchestra."



"my legatees," and was always ready to help them. "He consoles me for growing old," he would say of a young artist of promise. Above all things he warned them not to be afraid of striking out into new paths. "If you can only express your ideas by making use of unaccustomed combinations, do not be afraid of enriching theory by a new rule; others will use your licence, perhaps in a better way than you have done, and thus force the most strict theorists to adopt it. . . . Everything is permissible to the artist who can really grasp Nature, the 24 scales are only the painter's palette: to forbid his blending the colours is foolish; it is forbidding him to be original."

His saying about Selection in art is one of his best. "A useless beauty is a harmful beauty. The great task of art is to determine the place which everything should occupy." He had some pupils, among them a Madame de Baur, who has described his way of teaching. He would not undertake the technical part, leaving that to other masters, and devoting himself to interpretation and expression. Conscious of his own short-comings in technical knowledge, he advised pupils to study harmony seriously, "for now," he said, "we must *know*." He would illustrate his theories by composing melodies himself.<sup>1</sup> In the last years of his life, everything connected with music excited him terribly; he followed a performance with such intense interest that it exhausted him. Formerly he

<sup>1</sup> He wrote "L'Art de Préluder" (1802) for his pupils.

had been a brilliant talker, but in these last years conversation was too great an effort and fatigued him too much. He grew silent and was seldom known to laugh, although he smiled readily. This was all that remained of the gay humour of former years, when he had always been ready with repartee or joke, as for instance, when he replied to a snub about his conversation: "I am a musician; I can adapt myself to any tone." Or when he told a *Curé*: "I will not be buried in your churchyard, your bells are out of tune." Grief at the loss of his daughters and the terrible scenes of the Revolution had shattered him completely. No wonder he could no longer compose.

Grétry composed some fifty operatic works, but most of these were only of ephemeral interest. About half a dozen stood the test of revivals.<sup>1</sup> In comparing the enormous number of works turned out so easily, often at short notice, by these earlier musicians with the few masterpieces produced by modern composers, such as Wagner, one understands how such facility was possible. There was nothing like the deeply thought out, coherent artistic scheme of the modern music drama. The primitive style of instrumentation, the simplicity of the score, the well-worn lines of conventional routine, all favoured the quick throwing together of compositions often merely of "occasional"

<sup>1</sup> *Zémire et Azor* was last performed 1862, *Le tableau parlant* 1865, *Richard* as late as 1897. Several had to be re-orchestrated—*Richard* by Adam, *L'épreuve Villageoise* by Auber.



*raison d'être*. Many of Grétry's works were composed and produced in haste, then, after a failure, they were re-modelled, perhaps with new material.

The well-known criticism that "you could drive a coach and six between Grétry's bass and his first violins" shows the weakness of his score. His gift was for easy, spontaneous, trivial melodies which caught popular taste, and he showed originality in making the orchestra describe, comment upon, underline, as it were, the situations. In his *Richard Cœur de Lion* he even uses Blondel's melody as a kind of *leit motiv* which returns in various forms throughout the opera, and he explained that this melody is the pivot on which the whole opera turns.

Grétry's *Memoires ou Essais sur la Musique*, published 1789, were reprinted in An. V of the Republic by Order of the Government. He says that after 1789 "there was no real musical evolution in France. Composers, each according to his talents, made experiments on every tone, in every style. At the height of the political revolution music sought expression in desperate accents; as the storm grew calmer, music became more human; a lower pitch was used, the diminished seventh lost its importance; during the Terror it was only used to express rage, to-day it expresses tenderness and grief."<sup>1</sup>

"Music may be taken as a fairly good ther-

<sup>1</sup> Rameau, however, long before this said the diminished Seventh was suitable for "Plaintes Tendres."

mometer of Manners (*mœurs*), as the Exchange marks the scale of public credit and the greater or less degree of confidence among merchants. Not only were the harshest discords in vogue during the revolutionary crisis, but the pitch of orchestras and wind instruments rose considerably; piano manufacturers adopted the same pitch to the detriment of the human voice; screaming took the place of singing,<sup>1</sup> the finest voices soon lost their softness and flexibility and became out of tune. My musical compositions of this date were more moderate than most in this respect; whilst conforming to the order of the day, I took a pleasure in showing up its abuses and used softer *nuances* as far as possible." Like Rameau he speculated about music as a means of expression. Not only sorrow and joy, but such emotions as anger, jealousy, shame, may be expressed in music. Even friendship, sarcasm or flattery may be rendered. And like Rameau (but not in agreement with his conclusions) he analyses the characteristics of the different scales and the emotional quality of instruments: the clarinet and the bassoon are sad, the oboe is rustic. Even in merry music the clarinet is sad; "if I had to dance in prison I should choose a clarinet to play the tune." The colours of notes interested him, too, and he anticipated the idea of the Colour Scale and of Music in Medicine.

He had an inventive mind and imagined a kind

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps referring to the huge choral compositions and orchestras introduced by Méhul in public festivals.

of metronome for rhythm, also a musical barometer with a merry air for fine weather and a sad one for gloomy days.

The writing of his "Memoires" (three volumes) was doubtless a great mental resource in later years. He had always been an interested and intelligent observer of men and things, and intercourse with the Encyclopædists developed his bent towards reflection and literary expression. He found refuge and consolation in his diaries, notes and essays. He reveals himself, Grétry the man, as naïve, sincere, kindly, writing sometimes in the stilted elegance of the day, sometimes with absolute simplicity, evidently always enjoying his philosophical reflections and speculations. He unburdens his soul about the unsympathetic nature of Marmontel at some length, laments the hardships of an artist's career, which often interfere with happiness in family life and concludes that the only real happiness consists in living for others and sacrificing one's self for them.

He dreams of a theatre of the future which is astonishingly like Bayreuth. "I should like the theatre to be small, holding 1,000 persons at most; with only one class of seats everywhere: no boxes. I would have the orchestra concealed, so that neither musicians, lights nor music-stands should be visible to the audience. The effect would be magical. . . . A circular hall rising in tiers forming a simple amphitheatre decorated only by frescoes." He foresees that all accessories foreign to

the "poem" must be got rid of. "The ornamental singers will be banished from theatres to concert halls: *roulades* will seem so ridiculous that no one will sing them save those who wish to imitate the nightingale. There are also orchestral abuses which must be abolished."

## WORKS BY GRÉTRY

The first three were written before he came to Paris.

- 1766. Les Vendangeuses } Destroyed.
- 1767. Isabelle et Gertrude }
- 1768. Les Mariages Samnites. (Légier) (re-written later).
- 1769. Le Huron. (Marmontel).  
       Lucile. (Marmontel).  
       Le Tableau Parlant. (Anseaume).
- 1770. Silvain. (Marmontel).  
       Les deux Avars. (F. de Falbaire).  
       L'Amitié à l'épreuve. (Favart).
- 1771. L'Ami de la Maison. (Marmontel).  
       Zémire et Azor. (Marmontel).
- 1773. Le Magnifique. (Sedaine).  
       La Rosière de Salency. (M. de Pézay).  
       Céphale et Procris. (Marmontel).
- 1775. La Fausse Magie. (Marmontel).
- 1776. Les Mariages Samnites. (Du Rozoy).
- 1777. Matroco. (Laujon).
- 1778. Les 3 Ages de l'opéra. (De Visme).  
       Le jugement de Midas. (Hales).  
       L'amant-jaloux. (Hales).
- 1779. Les évènements imprévus. (Hales).  
       Aucassin et Nicolette. (Sedaine).
- 1780. Andromaque. (Pitra).

1781. Emilie. (Guillard).  
1782. Colinette à la Cour. (Lourdé de Santerre).  
1783. La Caravane du Caïre. (Morel de Chef-de-ville).  
1784. L'épreuve Villageoise. (Desforbes).  
Richard Cœur de Lion. (Sedaine).  
1785. Panurge dans l'île des Lanternes. (Morel).  
1786. Amphitryon. (Sedaine).  
Les Méprises par ressemblance. (Patrat).  
Le Comte d'Albert. (Sedaine).  
1787. Le Prisonnier Anglais. (Desfontaines).  
1788. Le Rival Confident. (Forgeot).  
1789. Raoul Barbe-Bleue. (Sedaine).  
Aspasie. (Morel).  
1790. Pierre le Grand. (Bouilly).  
1791. Guillaume Tell. (Sedaine).  
1792. Clarisse et Ermance ou les deux Couvents.  
(Desprez).  
Basile ou à Trompeur, Trompeur et demi  
("Diamond cut Diamond"). (Sedaine).  
1794. La Rosière Republicaine (Planting of Tree  
of Liberty). (Silvain Maréchal).  
Joseph Barra. (Lévrier)  
Denys le Tyran, maître } Unpublished.  
d'école à Syracuse. }  
(Silvain Maréchal)  
Callias ou Amour et Patrie. (Hoffmann).  
1797. Lisbeth. (Favières).  
Anacréon chez Polycrate. (Guy).  
1799. Elisca ou l'amour Maternel. (Favières).

- |       |                            |                |
|-------|----------------------------|----------------|
| 1801. | Le Casque et les Colombes. | } Unpublished. |
|       | (Guillard).                |                |
| 1803. | Delphis et Mopsa.          | }              |

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CHAPTER V

ÉTIENNE NICOLAS MÉHUL

1763-1817





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ÉTIENNE NICOLAS MÉHUL

1763-1817

“ IF Méhul be not the greatest of our musicians, (and I do not know whom one could place above him), he is at least one of the greatest, certainly one of the most original and the one who best expresses the genius of France, the genius of clearness, vigour, concision, combined with elegance and style.”  
(A. POUGIN).

When the Revolution broke out in France Grétry was already middle-aged ; Méhul was a young man still under thirty. Both were among the dozen musicians who collaborated perforce in such state ordered compositions as the “ *Congrès des Rois*.” With more spontaneous inspiration Méhul wrote the famous *Chant du Départ*, which at that time rivalled the *Marseillaise* in popularity ; in both cases it was the music rather than the words which inspired the crowds who sang them.

Now-a-days Méhul is chiefly known as the composer of *Joseph* ; the fact that his other operas are practically unknown is due in many instances to the poorness of their subjects ; their fate may be taken

as an object lesson in the choice of a *libretto*. In the words of Cherubini, "It was not Méhul's talent which was at fault, but the subject of the poem. . . . In France the musician's fate always depends on the poet, and, whilst an excellent *libretto* may support mediocre music, the most beautiful music will never make a bad poem succeed."

Étienne Nicolas Méhul was born (22 June 1763) at Givet, a little town on the Meuse in the picturesque Ardennes district. As far as is known, his family was in no way remarkable nor could it boast of any particular musical talent. His father had been butler to Count Montmorency, afterwards, by a not unusual sequence of events, setting up a wine shop or tavern in Givet. Of four children only Étienne and a sister survived childhood. The plain, solid little house of the Méhuls is still standing in the rue Méhul (formerly rue des Religieuses) with a tablet commemorating the birth of the composer.

Evidently Méhul gave evidence of musical talent as a child, for at the age of ten he could play the organ in church, having been taught by the old blind organist of the place.

About this time a German monk named Hanser was appointed organist and musical director at the monastery of Laval-Dieu, some miles from Givet. This excellent musician started a class of eight pupils for organ and counterpoint at the monastery, and Méhul became a member of the class. For four or five years he lived at the monastery, "eating

at the Abbot's table," a favourite with his master and the monks, who received him at their own expense as he was too poor to pay. In any case he was a talented pupil, one of whom they could be justly proud, and his sojourn there is still commemorated by a tablet in the church, stating that "Méhul played on Hanser's organ." Laval-Dieu is a lovely spot sheltered by mountains, in a fertile valley rich in wild flowers. The monks were fond of gardening and perhaps under their influence the young musician learnt to love flowers, in later life an absorbing interest, almost a passion, with him. These were the happiest years of his life, so happy, in fact, that he earnestly desired to remain there all his life and take the vows. But circumstances, chiefly his poverty, were against this, and in 1779 he set out to seek his fortune in Paris. The Abbé and Hanser had procured him a post as organist and some pupils in Paris, further providing him with a letter of introduction to Gluck,<sup>1</sup> and thus at the age of seventeen young Méhul arrived in the capital, as so many penniless young artists have arrived.

In 1779 Gluck was busy rehearsing his *Iphigénie en Tauride*. Méhul had long worshipped his genius from afar and hastened to call upon him. Legends usually spring up around such interviews, and as regards this one it is recorded that the great man was at his harpsichord, playing very loudly

<sup>1</sup> Hanser had made the acquaintance of Gluck, Grétry and Couperin on a visit to Paris.

and gesticulating, in an extremely *négligé* costume (a black velvet cap, slippers and a "kind of cami-sole"), "but" (said the hero-worshipper from the Ardennes) "all the magnificence of Louis XIV's *toilette* could not have fascinated me as did Gluck's *négligé*." Fortunately the great man received the youth kindly, took him to his rehearsals of *Iphigénie* and gave him many valuable hints about music during the few months before his (Gluck's) departure from Paris. He influenced Méhul's development undoubtedly, "taught me the philosophy and poetry of music," (says Méhul), and especially advised him to leave church music for operatic composition. After attending the final rehearsal of *Iphigénie* (conducted by Gluck in person) Méhul was seized with a burning desire to be present at the performance on the following evening, but could not afford to pay for a seat. Only one solution of the difficulty presented itself. Hiding in a box on the top-most tier, he spent the night in the theatre, awaking next morning half dead with cold and hunger. Before noon Vestris arrived for a final rehearsal of the dances. There was great amusement when a forlorn, dusty, dishevelled figure emerged, confessing his inability to remain until evening without food. Vestris ordered chocolate for him and persuaded the authorities to grant a free pass to so ardent a devotee of opera. No letter, Méhul said, ever gave him such keen pleasure as the one which bestowed on him freedom of entry to the opera whenever he liked. A trivial story, but one

which shows, at any rate, a certain sympathy and respect for artists in those days.

Perhaps it was through Gluck that Méhul became a pupil of Edelmann, a noted harpsichord player and composer of sonatas and some operas.<sup>1</sup> Méhul wrote a few early works, three "sonates pour clavecin" and two operas, which have disappeared, before he was twenty-one.

Also he set to music the prize poem *Cora*, by Valadier (which had won the Government prize for the best libretto), but this opera was only produced six years later and then without success.

Soon, however, he was stimulated by a better librettist, François Hoffmann, a clever and original young author, afterwards an excellent critic and journalist. The two young men became friends and, with the first opera produced by their joint work, Méhul scored his first triumph.

*Euphrosine ou le Tyran corrigé* is the story of a despot who gradually yields to the charms of the beautiful Euphrosine. It was an immediate success. After its first performance (4th September 1790) Méhul found himself famous. The critics ranked him somewhere between Gluck and Grétry, "between the Corneille and Molière of music." Grétry himself wrote a generous appreciation of this young composer (just twenty-six years of age), comparing him flatteringly with Gluck at thirty.

<sup>1</sup> Edelmann, an ardent Republican, took up politics with more zeal than discretion, he and his brother were both condemned to death.

"I do not say Gluck when he really was that age, but the experienced Gluck of sixty combined with the freshness of youth."

Berlioz always considered the music of this work among Méhul's best in point of dramatic force and passion—especially the duet "Beware of jealousy" struck him as worthy of Shakespeare's Iago. (It was after this success that *Cora* made its appearance, only as a failure).

*Stratonice* (with Hoffmann's libretto) followed (3 May 1792), as great a success as *Euphrosine*. The heroine was a Greek princess, beloved by the King of Syria, but also by his son, whose love she returns. The king, discovering their mutual love, generously sacrifices his own passion and bestows Stratonice's hand on his son.

Then came some music for a ballet, *le Jugement de Paris*, in which Méhul put together music by Haydn and Pleyel with connecting links of his own (6 March 1793), followed three weeks later by a one-act piece (by Hoffmann) called *Le vieux Sage et le jeune Fou* (28 March 1793).

Méhul now began to write *Mélide et Phrosine* on a libretto by Arnault, but the poem, on being submitted to the Public Censors, was not considered sufficiently "republican in spirit." There was nothing to condemn in words or plot, but (said the censor, one citizen Baudrais), "it is not enough that a work should not be *against* us, it must be *with* us. The spirit of your work is not republican: the manners of your characters are not republican:

the word 'liberty' does not occur once. You must bring your opera into harmony with our institutions." The word "liberty" was accordingly scattered generously about the poem, until the censors were appeased.

Meantime Méhul set to work on another subject, one more calculated to inspire patriotic sentiments. *Horatius Coclès* in one act (libretto by Arnault) was composed in seventeen days and performed 18th February 1794.<sup>1</sup> The heroic vein was in great favour at this moment and ancient history was ransacked to provide dramatic incidents for the inspiration and example of citizens: Cincinnatus, Marius, Mucius Scaevola, the Gracchi, all provided object-lessons in patriotism and civic virtue. Republican leaders were fully alive to the importance of educating and permeating the people with ideas favourable to a republican régime, although their object-lessons were not always on such a high level of classical heroism as the above. They sometimes provided composers with degrading subjects, and it was only a week after *Horatius Coclès* that the performance of the infamous *Congrès des Rois* took place, for which twelve composers (including, as we have seen, Grétry and Méhul) had been commanded to write the music.

*Mélidore et Phrosine*, at last performed (4 May

<sup>1</sup> Méhul wrote two overtures for *Horatius*, one of which he used afterwards for his opera *Adrien*, which shows the overture as a detached or detachable prelude rather than closely connected with the work.



1794), scored a success in spite of its unattractive plot, which turned upon the guilty love of a brother for his sister. It was really the music which made the success of this opera: Méhul's genius showed itself strong enough to triumph over a weak libretto. He was again compared to Gluck, "since the *finale* to Act I of Gluck's *Armide* nothing so forcible has been written as the *finale* to Act I of *Phrosine*."

This opera appeared five or six weeks before the fall of Robespierre, whose death preserved so many lives more precious than his own. At this moment, when the frenzy of accusation was at its height and even the most innocent were "suspect," the very success of *Mélide* was dangerous. Arnault relates that, as nothing incriminating could be found in either words or music, both author and composer were denounced for "unseemly extravagance in the costumes," a detail for which they were in no way responsible and for which only the singers were to blame. Méhul went to Barrère, a member of the Committee of Public Safety, whom he knew personally, and asked his advice. Barrère advised them to take no steps in the matter, but to let the opera run its course. To withdraw it might look like admitting the charge against them. As far as risks were concerned, was not every one in danger who in any way attracted attention? "Besides," said Barrère calmly, "are we not all at the foot of the guillotine, all of us, beginning with myself?" This he added with an air of complete detachment.

Méhul confessed afterwards to a secret shudder,

for Barrère had received them in his dressing-gown, bare-necked, a costume not without suggestion of a dread possibility. The librettist Arnault, who was present at the interview, had already been arrested as an "émigré" two years before and owed his life to the actress, Mlle. Comtat, to whom he now dedicated the poem of *Mélidore et Phrosine*.

No one, in fact, was safe at that time, but Méhul remained unmolested in spite of the menace. Other musicians, too, had their vicissitudes: Sarette, the founder and director of the Institut National de Musique was sent to prison because one of his pupils had sung Grétry's detested air, "Richard, O mon roi." He was allowed to come out in order to superintend arrangements for the Fête of the Supreme Being, accompanied, however, by a gendarme who never left him by day or night. After a time this extreme vigilance relaxed and Sarette was finally released. Ignatius Pleyel was arrested for no particular reason at Strasbourg and ordered to write a patriotic Song with grand orchestra as a proof of his republican sentiments.

A characteristic incident is related by Pougin. A class of pupils from the Conservatoire, accompanied by their professor, set out (on 19 Fructidor, An IV.) to visit the "Molière of music" (Grétry) in his Ermitage at Montmorency. On reaching St. Denis their "papers" were examined in the Municipal Hall and considered unsatisfactory. The professor was detained as hostage until the

youths proved their status as musicians by improvising a canon in five parts :

Citoyens, rendez-nous notre professeur,  
C'est un bon—citoyen,

after which they were allowed to pursue their pilgrimage. Such incidents were of daily occurrence under the paternal rule of the Republic. But musicians as a class were held in due honour by the Convention. They were always applauded at public *fêtes*, where they occupied seats of honour and their names were published by the side of victorious generals, for it was recognised that their music was a work of "public utility."

In July of this same year the famous *Chant du Départ*, which soon rivalled the *Marseillaise*, was sung in public for the first time. There are several stories about its composition. The poem was by Marie Joseph Chénier, whose brother, the unfortunate André, was under sentence of death at the time. One version has it that Chénier showed the poem to Méhul at an evening reception and Méhul then and there jotted down the music, undisturbed by the talk and laughter going on about him. However this may have been, *le Chant du Départ* was sung at the various *fêtes* which the Government ordered so frequently: at the commemoration of the fall of the Bastille (14th July), again on 24th September, when the body of Marat was placed in the Panthéon (that of Mirabeau having been removed to make room for him), again

at the distribution of flags to the soldiers, in short, at all public ceremonies. Some 18,000 copies were distributed to soldiers and the song became a national possession. In a Proclamation a couple of years later it was stated: "In the first rank of Republican composers the nation places and proclaims Citizen Méhul, whose *Chant du Départ* rivals the *Hymne des Marseillaise*."

Other patriotic songs of this kind written by Méhul during this period were: The Hymn of the 9th Thermidor, the Song of Victories, the Song of the Return (*Chant du Retour*), all to words by M. J. Chénier, and other Hymns—to Reason, to the Eternal, to Peace, to the Supreme Being—all composed for public festivals.

Although Grétry declared that no great musical works were inspired during the Revolution, it was not the fault of those in authority, for they were really anxious to encourage the Arts, especially music. Chénier doubtless voiced their ideas when he proposed the institution of a Conservatoire de Musique: "It will be a glorious thing for you, Representatives, to show an astonished Europe how, in the midst of a great war, which has been an uninterrupted series of triumphs for the Republic . . . whilst establishing a wise and republican constitution which shall endure for centuries, how in the midst of all this you have devoted some moments to the encouragement of an art which has gained victories and which shall yet celebrate

the delights of peace." Even in the Reign of Terror the Convention respected music, recognising the power of a song like the *Marseillaise* to inspire armies. One of the first acts of the Revolutionary authorities, as far back as 1789, had been to grant theatres the right to manage their own affairs, and an immediate consequence of this was the dismissal of a troupe of Italian artistes under the management of Marie Antoinette's hair-dresser, whose place at the théâtre Feydeau was taken by French actors; these were soon in keen rivalry with the Opéra Comique. Singers and actors no doubt regretted the lost magnificence of court performances, where scenery, costumes, orchestra were on a lavish scale. Under the old régime, too, a generous if arbitrary system of pensions and royal gifts had rewarded genius. Old artists especially felt the loss of this support, but the younger ones, like Méhul, greeted the new order of things with enthusiasm, until they were horrified by its excesses. The little band of musicians seem to have drawn closely together during this period, especially during the Reign of Terror, forming a circle of friends united by common interests and a common danger: Grétry, Cherubini, Gossec, Berton, Méhul, Lesueur, Boieldieu, the youngest of all. They were obliged to take part in the numerous patriotic fêtes and to collaborate in musical productions for those occasions.

When the Hymn to the Supreme Being (by Gossec) was to be performed, Robespierre con-

ceived the brilliant idea of having it sung by the whole population of Paris at the Champ de Mars. Méhul, Gossec and Lesueur, who were professors at the Institut de Musique (near the Rue Montmartre) were ordered to rehearse the crowds beforehand. Every evening the three composers taught as many as they could gather together to sing the air in unison. Whether this took place in the Institut or whether, as the legend has it, the three sallied forth to the Boulevards, the Halles and the neighbourhood of the Institut respectively, is not certain, but upon one occasion Gossec was carried shoulder-high by enthusiastic *Citoyens*. Towards the close of 1795 the Government showed their appreciation of Méhul by making him one of the Directors at the Conservatoire de Musique,<sup>1</sup> also appointing him to represent music at the Institut. In these posts he was associated with Grétry, Gossec, Lesueur, Cherubini, altogether a flattering distinction for a young musician (he was barely thirty-two).

It was a pity that two operas composed at this time should have failed owing to their weak *libretti*. *Doria ou la Tyrannie détruite* (Legouvé and d'Avrigny) was performed in March, 1795, without success. And *La Caverne* (Forgeot), in the same year, was equally unfortunate. (The plot of the latter had already been used by Lesueur in an opera

<sup>1</sup> After 3rd August, 1795, the Institut National de Musique became the Conservatoire; the Directors received 5,000 livres per annum.



of the same name).<sup>1</sup> Only a small portion of Méhul's *Caverne* has been preserved.

Méhul was persistently unfortunate in his *libretti*; strangely enough, he never seemed to realise that a good plot and a well-written poem are factors of importance in operatic success. Critics respected his music; quite early in his career his reputation as a composer was assured. Again and again his operas were apparently successful at their first performance; there was applause from an interested audience, criticisms of the music were favourable. But the interest was short-lived, audiences grew smaller after the first night or two and soon the opera would be withdrawn. The music, however much appreciated, could not compensate bored audiences for vapid subjects. Thus the apparent success would resolve itself into a failure, especially on the financial side. Méhul felt these disappointments very keenly, but does not seem to have understood the real reason. In later life, when he was melancholy and easily depressed as a consequence of ill-health, he fancied that the world was against him and spoke bitterly of the intrigues of enemies.

With curious lack of insight and rare humility he attributed the blame of one of these failures to himself. This was in connection with a later work, *Les Amazones ou la Fondation de Thèbes* (1811),

<sup>1</sup> It was quite customary for two or more composers to write music on the same subject. Thus there were two Operas "Lodoïska," two "Paul and Virginia," two "Romeo and Juliet," etc.

composed on an unusually stupid "book" by one Jouy, a naval officer, who had turned his attention to literature. This work was an irremediable *fiasco*, heightened by an untoward accident to stage machinery. The car descended without the God, Jupiter casually making his entrance on foot *after* the supreme moment, to the untoward joy of spectators, among whom were the Emperor and Empress. Méhul was bitterly disappointed. But either he did not realise the weakness of the *libretto* or he was too generous to reproach Jouy with it. He wrote in the depths of discouragement: "We fall, my dear Jouy, and I feel it deeply. My star dims yours, I have brought you ill-luck. Do not be angry with me, I have done my best, I can do no more. You have been more successful with others and will be so again." Speaking of another *libretto* of Jouy's he continues: "I have not the courage to write the music. I am bruised, crushed, disgusted, discouraged! One needs happiness, mine is finished. I must and will keep to peaceful interests. I will live among my flowers, in my silent retreat, far from the world and its intrigues. I cannot give up the art I love and the work I need, but my happiness shall no longer be dependent on the superficial but harsh criticisms of a capricious public."

Yet two years later (1813) he could not resist composing another opera, *le Prince Troubadour ou le Coureur des Dames*. Once again his music suffered through the ineptness of the poem (by Alexandre



Duval). Again Méhul suspected intrigues on the part of enemies. This attitude explains the bitterness so apparent in his *éloge funèbre* of Grétry, four years later, when, after alluding to Grétry's easily-won success, he added: "If one knew beforehand at what price fame is bought, proud and sensitive souls would choose a life of obscurity in preference to the *éclat* which is too much envied not to be a source of sorrows."

We have slightly anticipated the course of events in order to show how Méhul all his life was the victim of poor *libretti*; his work, his career and his fame suffered in consequence. Perhaps he was lacking in poetic and dramatic instinct and merely looked upon the text as a peg whereon to hang music. In any case he was careless in this respect and accepted almost any "book" without criticism. (His most successful work, *Joseph*, is again a case in point).

He shewed an equally unfortunate lack of insight in his choice of a wife, the daughter of a fashionable doctor named Gastaldy, who frequented the artistic *salons* of the day, in private life a somewhat notorious character, a gambler and a drunkard. The daughter inherited some of her father's intellectual gifts, but unfortunately most of his eccentricities (among them a violent temper). After eighteen months of married life the couple agreed to separate. Mme. Méhul retired to Lyons and henceforth never took the slightest interest in her husband or his affairs, ex-

cepting that on his death she made a sudden visit to Paris in order to take possession of all his portable property, including the score of musical works, etc., which she carried off to Lyons. She outlived Méhul by 40 years.

Another librettist now dawned upon Méhul's horizon, unfortunately as inept as his predecessors. He proffered the weak poem of *Le jeune Henri*, which Méhul accepted. Grétry had wisely declined this subject some years before but Méhul, with his usual lack of discrimination, wasted some of his best music upon a libretto so evidently ill-timed.

Bouilly we may recall as the young friend and occasional librettist of Grétry (whose youngest daughter had been betrothed to him). He was not greatly admired by critics of the period, who considered his style too lachrymose—he clung to the phase of Sensibility—and were fond of introducing the obvious pun upon his name.

*Le jeune Henri* savoured of royalty and the public, at once recognising a "tyran" in the title rôle, hissed and made such loud demonstration of displeasure at the first performance (1st May 1797), that it was impossible to proceed. The music however, was recognised as beautiful. At the third performance the public insisted on Méhul appearing on the stage in spite of his reluctance, and public, actors, orchestra all greeted him with applause. The overture was so especially brilliant that even on the first evening it was enthusiastically encored and became so phenomenally popular that

it was afterwards regularly performed as a kind of Interlude at operatic performances during a period of nearly 30 years.

This Overture, known as *La Chasse du Jeune Henri*, is one of Méhul's most celebrated works, and still survives as an interesting example of Programme Music. It is frankly descriptive, following a Stag Hunt under the headings: Dawn, the call to the Hunt, the trail found, lost, found again, the gallop, the killing of the stag, etc. Méhul obtained an effect by placing the horns at various points in the orchestra to answer each other, a device greatly admired. This brilliant piece of descriptive music is always associated with Méhul, whilst the opera itself (in two acts) was a lamentable failure. The idea of "royalty" was sufficient to damn the plot, although the connection with Henry IV. was of the slightest. But the story, a mere episode, was in itself too feeble and insipid to ensure any better result. The young prince in disguise who carries off the prize in village sports offered no great dramatic interest.

A new era dawned in Paris when the nightmare Reign of Terror at last came to an end. The old order had been swept away and there were new fashions in everything, in dress, in social life, in art, new *salons* with new shibboleths.

Méhul was welcome everywhere, not only as a musician of genius but as a delightful companion with intellectual interests and great personal charm. Warm-hearted and affectionate, capable of any

sacrifice for those he loved, he had a large circle of devoted friends, who in some measure compensated him for the lack of domestic happiness.

There were all kinds of artistic and literary *salons* at which Méhul appeared as the fashionable young composer. At Madame Recamier's, for instance, in the Chaussée d'Antin or in the summer at Clichy; at the banker Séguin's; at Talma's suppers, the *rendez-vous* more especially of actors and literary men. Every one of note was also to be met at the house of the painter Ducreux (who painted the best known portrait of Méhul as a young man of thirty),<sup>1</sup> whose charming wife and pretty daughters were the attraction of their *salon*. Among the *habitués* were La Harpe, Fontanes, Piccinni, Sophie Arnault, Pradher, Cherubini, travellers and foreigners of note. Here Méhul made the acquaintance of Joséphine Beauharnais, who took a great fancy to him and presented him in due course to the First Consul Bonaparte. Méhul was always a favourite with them both. Perhaps he was most thoroughly at home in the house of the famous violinist Kreutzer (to whom Beethoven dedicated the sonata bearing his name, which it is said Kreutzer never played). Madame Kreutzer was an especially delightful hostess and there was an atmosphere of unaffected kindness and ease at their receptions which Méhul enjoyed. His affection for these friends is very evident in his letters

<sup>1</sup> A pastel, Méhul in the Directoire period, with long hair, close-shaven, a huge white cravat and coat à la Robespierre.

to Madame Kreutzer. Everywhere "ce cher Méhul" was welcome. He talked well, with flashes of wit and repartee, and, when in the mood, had a knack of improvising stories of the supernatural with telling effect. He showed real literary skill in working up to a climax which thrilled his hearers. With this dramatic instinct it is strange that he was so uncritical about his *libretti*.

In person Méhul was about middle height, slightly built, with rather irregular features, a delightful smile and a beautiful speaking voice. ("When he simply said 'Good morning,' the word had a charm," said the painter Prud'hon). Among his personal friends were the thirty years older Gossec, who was especially fond of him; Boieldieu, the much younger composer, adored him (Méhul proved himself a generous friend at Boieldieu's *début* in the musical world); Cherubini, his colleague at the Conservatoire. Rouget de Lisle (the young officer who wrote both words and music of the *Marseillaise*) and Méhul were warmly attached to each other. Rouget de Lisle dedicated his *essais en vers et en prose* to his friend (1796), "to the noble and sensitive soul who upholds the dignity of the true artist." No artist was ever more universally loved and respected than Méhul. There was a nobility and manly straightforwardness in his character which even his enemies were forced to admire, and his generosity was extraordinary. In the words of Arnault, "whilst other people may have generous *traits*, Méhul's whole

life was generosity." His help of Boieldieu, the procuring of a Government pension for Monsigny,<sup>1</sup> reduced to poverty in his old age, are but isolated instances.

As a young man Méhul was ambitious, he longed for fame—"j'aime la gloire avec fureur," he wrote in his thirtieth year. He achieved fame, but the failure of his operas to establish themselves as lasting successes was a bitter disappointment. He imagined himself the victim of intrigues and enemies, especially in later life, and even his generous nature sometimes gave way to jealousy when he saw others succeed where he had failed. He confessed with childlike frankness: "I don't think I am envious, yet other people's successes give me pain. I hope to expiate my fault by confessing it."

The vicissitudes of the opera *Adrien* show the determination of the Republic to root out any lingering admiration of royalty. As early as 1792 Méhul had composed the music of *Adrien, Empereur de Rome* on a libretto by Hoffman, founded on Metastasio's "Hadrian in Syria." The choice of such a subject at that time seems inexplicable. No sooner were rehearsals in progress than the authors were accused of anti-republican sentiments and finally the production was forbidden on the

<sup>1</sup> Composer of opera (*Félix* and *le Déserteur*), was ruined by the Revolution, and at the age of 77, when Méhul helped him, was almost blind as well as without means of support. Audibert (*Indiscrétions et Confidences*) gives a charming account of Méhul's kind reception of a young unknown artist.



ground that it might occasion "des troubles." In vain Hoffmann protested energetically in newspapers and open letters that the work was not the least in favour of royalty.

For seven years it remained unheard, but at last (5 March 1799) it was permitted to appear as *Adrien*, the objectionable "*Emperor*" having been banished from the title.

It was an immediate success with the public, the "poem" being praised and the music pronounced a *chef d'œuvre*, "rich, beautiful, worthy of the author of *Stratonice*." But the Five Hundred, alarmed lest the pomp and circumstance attendant on Emperors should exercise a deleterious effect upon the public mind, declared it a "seditious" work and intrigues were set on foot which stopped the performances.

Next year, however, when Napoleon became First Consul, *Adrien* was revived (3 February 1800) before a crowded house. Again critics sang its praises. Yet *Adrien* was not really a success, in spite of the music. Méhul spoke of this "unfortunate" work; it remained one of those tantalising half-successes which disappointed him so often. Including revivals in 1801 and 1803, *Adrien* was performed nineteen times in all. It was never published, but the original score exists in the archives of the Opéra.<sup>1</sup>

(It is curious how many composers were attracted by the subject of Hadrian. No fewer than

<sup>1</sup> Méhul's preceding operas were also never published.

thirty-three operas were written with this title, among the composers being Pergolesi, Scarlatti, J. C. Bach).

In the same year *Ariodant* was staged (11 October 1799). The subject of this opera in three acts was taken by Hoffmann from "Orlando Furioso," in the hope, said Méhul, that heroes of ancient chivalry might prove less obnoxious than those of royal or imperial lineage. The plot was similar to that of Shakespeare's "Much Ado about Nothing." Some of his finest music is in this opera, which Berlioz ranks as among those "very beautiful works of Méhul which scored no great success."<sup>1</sup> Cherubini said it was full of musical beauties. The overture had original effects, it was simply an introduction (*adagio*) for 'cellos and double-bass, ending on the dominant and immediately followed by an air for tenor. Whether Rossini knew this overture or not, (and probably he did, says Mr. Pougin), some of the effects obtained in his overture of "Tell" were anticipated by Méhul.

M. Brancour considers the musical painting in the Invocation to Night as worthy of comparison with passages in *Freischütz* and Mendelssohn's *Midsummer Night's Dream*. "To the murmur of the strings the fanfare of distant horns is borne, flute and violin answer, soon joined by clarinet and bassoon. Then a double choir sings the mys-

<sup>1</sup> *Ariodant* was not without success, however. It was performed thirty-eight times, then revived in the following year with a quite brilliant reception. Critics were enthusiastic.



terious strains of the hymn of love. The music of *Ariodant* is dramatic, sombre, passionate, imbued with the spirit of romantic chivalry in keeping with the subject."

In July 1800 the grand national Fête de la Concorde commemorated the taking of the Bastille and the return of the victorious army from Italy with Bonaparte, First Consul, at its head. Méhul was commissioned to write music for this event upon a poem by Fontanes, "le Chant du 25 Messidor" (10 June). The work was on a grandiose scale, as befitted the occasion.

Méhul introduced three orchestras (considered enormous in those days), two of a hundred performers each, the third, consisting only of two harps and a horn, accompanied a female choir. These orchestras were placed at a distance from each other, two in the nave of the Temple of Mars (les Invalides), the small one in the dome. Playing sometimes alternately, sometimes massed, they produced a great effect, contrasted with the effect of lightness produced by the voices, harp and horns in the dome.

The *Chant* was in six parts: the first with two large orchestras and three choirs (*adagio*); then one orchestra and bass solo (*allegro*), etc. Another innovation was the use of the tuba, buccina<sup>1</sup> and tamtam in orchestra (this last also used with effect in *Uthal*). The music has not been preserved, al-

<sup>1</sup> Ancient Roman instruments, apparently copied from Roman sculpture.

though it made profound impression at the time. Méhul conducted in person before the brilliant assembly, which was no longer quite republican in its arrangements. The First Consul, the other Consuls, the municipal authorities, the Diplomatic *Corps* all occupied seats of honour, surrounded by persons of rank and fashion, and citizens were not admitted *en masse* but by invitation.

Méhul was very successful in these compositions for choir and orchestra on a vast scale. Originating in the popular *fêtes* of the Republic, they were continued under the Empire and Méhul was the most frequent composer. He wrote the *Cantata* (as they began to be called) in honour of the marriage of Napoleon and Marie Louise (1810).

*La Dansomanie*, "folie pantomime" (a ballet in two acts), shows Méhul in different vein. The idea and the plot came from Gardel, a dancer, and had the advantage of being mimed or danced by a galaxy of "stars," among them Vestris and Gardel. The part of the "dance maniac" was taken by a famous dancer named Goyon (June, 1800).

This lively, almost farcical, piece was one of the most successful ballets ever produced, and remained on the *répertoire* twenty-six years.

In the spring of this same year Givet, Méhul's birthplace, recognised its illustrious citizen by a *fête* in his honour. The theatre was decorated with flowers and inscriptions; there were speeches, song, a ballet. In the absence of Méhul himself his "venerable parents" were honoured in his name,

occupying seats of honour, presented with bouquets by the singers, whilst a bust of the composer was wreathed with flowers and a tablet placed in the theatre as a permanent record:

“Méhul, born at Givet, 22 June 1763, was crowned here, 25 Floréal An VIII (15 May 1800).”<sup>1</sup>

This recalls the similar homage rendered to Grétry by the town of Liège, at which his mother had occupied the post of honour. On the whole a more gracious appreciation than the posthumous honours of funeral processions.

Unfortunately Méhul's works, in various styles, about this time were unimportant, uninteresting as regards *libretti*, and unsuccessful. *Une Folie* (April 1802) on a stupid “book” by Bouilly was only saved from being a complete *fiasco* by the music.

A change of style came under the influence of “Ossian,” which swept over Europe about this time, a complete contrast to the stilted classicism of monarchical days, the domestic sentimentalism of Grétry and the half-hearted leaning toward Greek and Roman subjects under the Directoire. “Ossian” roused enthusiasm throughout Europe. The poems were read, translated, imitated. Lesueur composed an opera which became very popular (*Ossian ou les Bardes*, 1804). Napoleon declared that he loved Ossian “like the murmur of winds and waves of the sea.”<sup>2</sup> Méhul found inspiration

1 A statue of Méhul was unveiled at Givet in 1892 by Massenet.

2 He was still fond of reading “Ossian” at St. Helena.

in a poem by one Saint Victor and composed *Uthal*, a one-act opera (17 May 1806). The plot is founded upon the episode of Malvina, wife of Uthal, the hero who is fighting against her father. Malvina says she will belong to the vanquished, the one who is most unhappy and who needs her most. The dramatic interest was not very strong and once again Méhul's music suffered in consequence. He had succeeded in reflecting something of the melancholy grandeur of the poem, and in the overture imparted a sombre character to the music by employing violas instead of violins, an original effect (which Grétry, however, found extremely depressing). As usual he obtained some excellent contrasts, *e.g.*, the Hymn to the Sun sung by "Bards" to harp, flute and horns, and the virile war songs.

*Uthal* was a failure, so was *Gabrielle d'Estreés* (only three months later), and friendly critics advised Méhul not to waste his music on inept poems, nor "to accustom our young authors to count on the genius of an Orpheus to make their stupidities succeed."

Napoleon (or, as he was known at the earlier part of his career, Bonaparte) had a great liking for Méhul, not entirely for his musical genius, which he did not altogether appreciate, but because he was personally sympathetic. Méhul always dined once a week at Malmaison and the First Consul was fond of discussing music with him, as with other artists. He frankly thought the Con-

servatoire and Méhul's own compositions too "tudesque" and "scientifique." His idea was that music should be pleasing to the ear, the present school was too noisy. He preferred the Italian School of light opera (Paisiello), etc.

Méhul, by way of reply, showed surprising versatility by composing (*incognito*) the music of *l'Irato*, a light "opera bouffe" completely different from his usual style. Marsollier had written the amusing *libretto*, but Méhul did not acknowledge his share in the work at first. It was announced as an Italian opera with French words, music by "Signor Fiorelli," and was performed during Carnival (17th February 1801). The result was an extraordinary success and a great triumph for Méhul when he disclosed his identity with "Signor Fiorelli."

Bonaparte was delighted with the hoax and begged Méhul to "deceive him often in this way," a doubtful compliment. Méhul dedicated *l'Irato* to him when it was published.

"To General Bonaparte,

"First Consul of the French Republic.

"Your remarks about music having inspired me with the desire to compose something in less severe style than that which I have hitherto employed, I have ventured upon *l'Irato*: the attempt has succeeded, to you I owe it.

"Salut et respect,

"MÉHUL."

After the dedication comes a declaration of Méhul's musical faith, a reply to criticisms on this new departure.

He begins by saying that after *l'Irato* many persons may imagine he has changed his style, and if *l'Irato* pleases them they will quote it to condemn his previous works. But he is not converted to any other style. "In music I know of no one style hostile to another. . . . I think music has a nobler aim than that of merely pleasing the ear, it is not bound to be always 'amiable.' The style of music must always be determined by the drama, as the choice of colours is determined by the picture to be painted. If the music of *l'Irato* is different from my previous work, it is because *l'Irato* is different from any of my previous subjects. I know that most people like merely pretty music, but truth should never be sacrificed to charm."

*Joseph*, Méhul's crowning work, the one with which his name is chiefly associated, owed its existence to something like a challenge, lightly given and taken; another proof of his carelessness as regards subjects. During a dinner at Madame Gay's (another brilliant rendezvous for artists and authors), the talk turned on the tragedy *Omasis* or *Joseph in Egypt* by Baour-Lormian, recently performed at the Comédie Française. There was a lively discussion about the suitability of the story for dramatic purposes. The tragedy in question had introduced a not very successful love episode. Alexandre Duval maintained that the Biblical story



should be given in its simplicity. Méhul suggested it as a theme for opera and said he would compose the music if Duval wrote the poem. Duval afterwards had misgivings and found it a difficult task to provide sufficient dramatic interest. He could only make the most of Simeon's cruelty and Jacob's blindness by way of relief to the simplicity of the plot. With these meagre resources he produced the poem in a fortnight and Méhul wrote the music in two months. Thus was conceived and written the three-act opera *Joseph*, Méhul's greatest work (performed 17th February 1807). It was received with enthusiasm in spite of the weakness of the libretto, but only obtained 13 performances in Paris. In the provinces it was more popular and subsequent revivals were successful. Respect for the work steadily grew and musicians in all countries, especially in Germany, appreciated the quality of the music, both then and later.

Weber, who produced *Joseph* at Dresden (1817), pronounced it "a musical fresco, rather drab in tone but embued with a sentiment, a pathos, a purity of line and composition beyond compare." It ought, says M. de Curzon, to be considered a scenic oratorio rather than opera; "fresco" characterises it most happily.

Berlioz admired the music greatly—"The music is nearly always simple, touching, rich in successful if not very bold modulations, in broad full harmonies, in graceful accompaniment; the expression is always truthful." He mentions the prayer,

"God of Israel," in which the voices, only supported by detached chords (brass) are extremely effective. In its restraint it may lack colour, energy, movement, but it is not meant to be full of passionate life; it is, in short, a fresco. Wagner was enthusiastic and made musical friends study with him—"Méhul's magnificent work, which transported me to a higher world." *Joseph* was in fact greatly appreciated from the first in Germany and Austria. Cherubini praised it warmly as a work in which Méhul put forth all his resources, all his genius, but said this successful work would be his swan-song, and in this Cherubini was right. The opinion of a modern musician like M. Alfred Bruneau is equally enthusiastic: "One of the most real, most magnificent *chefs d'œuvre* of French art." He speaks of the purity, nobility, grandeur and strength of this music, which is virile yet tender, austere yet human, clearly defined as an antique marble. "In this sublime *Joseph*, his *chef d'œuvre*, Méhul has expressed himself, his tender, sensitive self, his kind, sad heart."

*Joseph* was indeed Méhul's swan-song. Subsequent works (among them *Les Amazones* already noticed) were neither important nor successful.<sup>1</sup> He had always been delicate in health and consumption now definitely declared itself. He grew

<sup>1</sup> *L'Oriflamme*, a little one-act opera, "inspired" to revive enthusiasm in Napoleon's star, was written in collaboration (Méhul, Paër, Kreutzer, Berton), composed, rehearsed and produced in six days. It was received enthusiastically (1 Feb., 1814), but only achieved 11 performances.



reserved, taciturn, and felt more and more keenly any failure or adverse criticism of his works. Naturally there were envious rivals and the usual detractors of fame and genius, but, whereas Méhul had once laughed at their attacks, he now suffered deeply and began to fancy enemies everywhere.

A great consolation in his last years was his love of flowers. He bought the poet's ideal, a small country house with a large garden, at Pantin and found happiness in his hobby, which became almost a passion. His love of flowers (in which he resembled Maupassant) was extraordinary. He was especially fond of tulips, collecting the rarest and most beautiful kinds ("their variety fascinates me," he said). Méhul never did anything by halves; he flung himself into this new pursuit with his usual energy, became friends with noted horticulturists and was soon known as a successful *amateur*: roses, pinks, hyacinths he loved, too, and he had a special fondness for auriculas. "A bed of choice anemones, arranged artistically, are to the eye what the music of Mozart and Gluck is to the ear." He discovered that florists were nearly always good folk, whom one must love, they are nearer Nature, farther from mankind and perhaps happier. "The flower lover has more durable, if less ardent, happiness than the lover of women. The object of his devotion does not appeal to his soul, but neither does it torment him. Jealousy and inconstancy, the cause of so much trouble in love affairs, are unknown in 'floro-

mania.' " Thus Méhul wrote, half in earnest, as he realised the wish he had expressed after the humiliating failure of *Les Amazones*: "I want to live among my flowers in retirement and silence, far from the world." Thus the Méhul of fifty returned to the peaceful life of his boyhood at Laval-Dieu, where the monks had given him a little plot of ground and taught him gardening. The days when he wrote "I love fame with passion" had come and gone meantime.

Inspired by Haydn's Symphonies, some of which were performed in Paris about this time, Méhul turned his attention to this form of composition. Between 1808-1810 four of his symphonies were performed, all with the exception of the first being composed about this date.<sup>1</sup> They were received with enthusiasm. He wished, he said, to show that a Frenchman can follow Mozart and Haydn, though afar off. Critics considered him of Haydn's school, though not an imitator of it. At that time Haydn was judged to have attained "the highest degree of perfection." Mozart in the opinion of many eminent critics, followed him at a great distance. Beethoven had gone "beyond his own aims in allowing his genius to wander in the intricate complications of science"<sup>2</sup> . . . . But some even considered Haydn obscure and unintelligible.

Méhul's views were far in advance of these.

<sup>1</sup> The first had been composed 1797, but there is no record of its performance at that time.

<sup>2</sup> *Le Moniteur Universel*, 17th March 1809.

When Duval asked him in some surprise, "Do you really consider Mozart incomparable?" he answered simply, "I really don't know. I never even thought of comparing him with anyone."<sup>1</sup>

Early criticisms of Beethoven are usually both amusing and instructive. French critics considered "the astonishing success of Beethoven's compositions a dangerous example for musical art. The contagion of 'tudesque' harmony seems to gain on the modern school of composition at the Conservatoire. They imagine they can produce an effect by the most barbarous dissonances and by employing all the instruments with *fracas*. Alas! it only tortures the ear, but never speaks to the heart."<sup>2</sup>

The downfall of Napoleon and the reverses of France were painful blows to Méhul. In addition he was personally affected by the new government's treatment of the Conservatoire. The founder and director, Sarette, was summarily dismissed, the revenues of the Conservatoire were greatly diminished and its very name was changed to that of simple "College of music." The salaries of professors were reduced. Cherubini and Méhul were among those who suffered, being deprived of their titles of "Inspecteurs" and reduced to "professors

1 Méhul's orchestra in these symphonies consisted of strings, two flutes, three oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, two horns, and kettledrums, no trumpets or trombones. Only two are known to-day, "they are intelligent but not great essays at this style of composition" (Pougin).

2 *Tablettes de Polymnie*, March, 1810.

of composition." Méhul, who had devoted himself to the Conservatoire for over twenty years, suffered intensely at this and other slights to art under the new *régime*.

During the next few years Méhul was slowly dying. In January, 1817, the doctors sent him to the South of France. His letters are echoes of the weary journey—in those days of travelling!—of an invalid, alone and so weak that on reaching Hyères, after one or two halting places on the way, he could only find rest in bed. To Madame Kreutzer he wrote, "At Lyons, as at Paris, I am a phantom who frightens children, but whom, fortunately, the grown-ups love. . . . My heart is the only part of me that lives, I have only sufficient strength to tell you that I love you, living or dying." Hyères with its cold winds was not a suitable place, "alone, at the ends of the earth, in an inn," among strangers whose language he could scarcely understand, he suffered intensely. There was no one to nurse him, and although the inn folk were not unkind, "the invalid is somewhat neglected when other travellers arrive." Utterly worn out, even music ceased to interest him: "I don't believe I can even remember how many notes there are in a scale."

Recovering somewhat towards the spring, he wrote from Hyères in March again to Madame Kreutzer, (we see him as, in spirit, one of Stevenson's little company of friends awaiting the summons to the last voyage);

“ Let us try to keep well, to meet again, to care for each other still more, until we arrive gently at the end of a life which we must give back, as it was only lent to us.”

On his way home he was received at Marseilles with every demonstration of honour: receptions, a concert, performances of *Joseph* and others of his works. May found him once more at Pantin, unfortunately no better for his sojourn in the South. He lingered through the summer among his flowers, but early in autumn returned to his house in Paris (rue Montholon, now 28), reduced to “ sitting by the fire and coughing from morning until night, and often from night until morning.” Here—18 October 1817,—he died.

Cherubini pronounced his *éloge* or funeral oration, and in course of time was laid to rest near his friend in the musicians' corner of Père la Chaise. Others of the group of friends are here: Grétry, Lesueur, Boieldieu, Hérold, also Bellini and Chopin.

In an uncommon degree Méhul was beloved and respected; his death was felt as a great loss by friends in many different circles; all bear witness to his uprightness and sincerity, to a real nobility of nature. His generosity was almost quixotic.

Although he had left home so early and in spite of the distance (geographical and mental) between them, he was always attached to his own family. He felt his father's death keenly (as late as 1807), and adopted the son of his sister (Madame

Daussoigne), bringing the child of six to Paris and providing for him generously. This nephew had some musical talent and was Méhul's pupil. An old aunt, a sister of his mother, also found a home with him in Paris.

He was chivalrous in defence of his friends. When critics accused Cherubini of imitating his music, Méhul wrote an indignant letter to the Press, declaring that a composer like Cherubini had no need to imitate any one, for he had his own inimitable style. And he offended Napoleon by refusing to accept a post of *Maître de Chapelle* unless Cherubini (who, he thought, deserved it) could share it with him. The post in question was given to Lesueur. He usually took no notice of attacks upon himself, but there is a characteristic anecdote of how he once challenged the author of some especially insulting remarks to a duel. When they met, Méhul's hand trembled, but, said he, "Make no mistake; it is from anger, not from fear," and he had the satisfaction of wounding his adversary. In reality he felt such attacks keenly, especially in later life, when weakened and depressed by ill-health.

The singers and executants of Méhul's works were devoted to him, and so were his pupils, who praise his manner of teaching as unusually clear, lucid, concise, "light itself." Hérold, the most distinguished of these, was especially fond of him and proud of being his pupil. "Shall I ever be worthy of such a master?"

Méhul, like Gossec, became an official musician



of the Revolution, developing an aptitude for composing music to suit the numerous fêtes arranged by the Republic: the *hymnes*, *chants*, compositions for voices and orchestra on a large scale, and cantatas. These fêtes were held in the open air or in large public buildings and necessitated masses of sound. Some critics thought that Méhul's style was rather spoilt by this, as he grew accustomed to providing loud, noisy effects. As the idea of the fêtes was to inspire citizens with republican and patriotic ardour, the audiences were encouraged to take part in the singing. Méhul dreamed of choirs of 3,000 voices, considered "monstrous" in those days. Little of this music is preserved, but from contemporary criticism it seems to have been often "academic" and uninspired, its effect being due chiefly to the volume of sound, also to skilful contrasts in *timbre* and mass. Thus Méhul employed the choir with harp and horn accompaniment as a contrast to the grand orchestra of 100 executants (in the *Chant du 25 Messidor*, 14 July 1800).

M. Saint-Saëns says that Méhul's instrumentation is very superior to that of his contemporaries and distinguishes him absolutely from other French composers of his period. He especially studied the effect of *timbre*, often seeking peculiar effects, such as muffling the drums (*Stratonice* overture), employing violas instead of violins (*Uthal*), and made unusually clever use of wind instruments. His overtures are often especially fine. M. Brancour

points out that Schubert studied them attentively and that Méhul's music was not without influence upon his own *Rosamund* and *Fierabras*. Méhul's overtures often anticipate the "Poèmes Symphoniques" of a later date (*e.g.*, especially those of *le Jeune Henri*, *Adrien*). He is sure that a revival of Méhul's best works would prove of interest and that not merely by way of historical reminiscence.

Cherubini compared his friend to Michael Angelo. "His style is broad and clear, tending rather towards forcible expression than towards grace and softness. He was the Michael Angelo rather than the Raphael of music."

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There is a certain monotony about the music written by these different composers for the fêtes of the Republic. They were often simply hymns or chants with the simplest harmony, accompanying, without any change or variation, a great number of verses. Gossec, however, composed a hymn for male choir in three parts to words by M. J. Chénier (14 July 1793). It apostrophised the "God of nations and of kings, of cities, of the country, of Luther, of Calvin, of the Children of Israel, the God worshipped by the Parsee when he acclaims the orb of Heaven. . . . Here in thy sight are assembled the sons and the support of France, celebrating the beginning of their happiness, equal among themselves as before Thee."

The "chants" glorify moral and civic virtues,



patriotic deeds, the laws of the Republic, the victories of its armies; they celebrate deliverance from tyrants and despots. They invoke Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, Gratitude, Reason, the Supreme Being, the Eternal. Hymns were also provided for special occasions such as weddings, funerals, for the festivals of youth, of old age, of husbands and wives; for those engaged in the manufacture of cannons, gunpowder and saltpetre (as we should say, munitions). A hymn for these last was composed by Catel (1798). "Le Salpêtre republicain," set to music by Cherubini (in mild 6/8 time), breathed death and destruction to enemies (including Pitt), and declared that France had everything necessary to conquer her enemies excepting saltpetre, "therefore, brothers, let us work, etc. . . .": in fact a topical song, but both words and music seem uninspiring now.

The downfall of Robespierre was greeted by a "Dithyrambic Hymn" (Rouget de Lisle, 1794). The Reign of Terror was denounced: "They deceived us, invoking Liberty and planning Tyranny. By day they cursed kings . . . whilst by night they laid snares and dug pitfalls for the nation and its rights." An uninspiring subject for music was assigned to Lesueur (1798), "Dithyrambic Hymn for the triumphal entry of objects of science and art collected in Italy."<sup>2</sup>

Gossec was the chief composer of this official music during the first years of the Revolution, but by 1800 he was an old man and Méhul took his

place. Gossec wrote a *Te Deum* for one of the earlier festivals (1790) in plain song but with an incongruous instrumental interlude consisting of dance airs. The *Marseillaise* was the only really inspired song of the Revolution.

## WORKS BY MÉHUL

*Operas*

1790. Euphrosine (3 acts). (Hoffman).  
1791. Cora (4 acts). (Valadier).  
1792. Stratonice (1 act). (Hoffman).  
1793. Le jugement de Paris (ballet 3 acts).  
(Gardel).  
— Le jeune Sage et le vieux Fou (1 act).  
Hoffman.  
1794. Horatius Coclès (1 act). Arnault.  
— Les Congrès des Rois (3 acts). (De-  
maillot). (In collaboration with other  
musicians).  
— Mélidore et Phrosine. (Arnault).  
— Timoléon (3 acts). (M. J. Chénier).  
1795. Doria ou la Tyrannie détruite (3 acts).  
(Legouvé and d'Avrigny).  
— La Caverne (3 acts). (Forgeot).  
1797. Le Pont de Lodi (1 act). (Delrien).  
1799. Adrien (3 acts). (Hoffman).  
— Ariodant (3 acts). (Hoffman).  
1800. Epicure (3 acts). (Demoustier). (Music  
in collaboration with Cherubini).  
— La Dansomanie (ballet 2 acts). (Gardel).  
— Bion (1 act). (Hoffman).  
1801. L'Irato (1 act). (Marsollier).

1802. Une Folie (2 acts). (Bouilly).  
— Le Trésor Supposé (1 act). (Hoffman).  
— Joanna (2 acts). (Marsollier).  
1803. Daphnis et Pandrose (ballet 2 acts).  
(Gardel).  
— Hélène (3 acts). (Bouilly).  
— Le Baiser et la Quittance (3 acts). (Picard). (Music in collaboration with Boieldieu, Kreutzer and Nicolo).  
— L'heureux malgré lui (2 acts). (Saint Just).  
1804. Les Hussites (3 acts). (A. Duval).  
1806. Les deux Aveugles de Tolède (1 act).  
(Marsollier).  
— Uthal (1 act). (Saint Victor).  
— Gabrielle d'Estrées (3 acts). (Saint Just).  
1807. Joseph (3 acts). (A. Duval).  
1810. Persée et Andromade (ballet, 3 acts).  
(Gardel).  
1811. Les Amazones ou la Fondation de Thèbes  
(3 acts). (Jouy).  
1813. Le Prince Troubadour (1 act). (A. Duval).  
1814. L'Oriflamme (1 act). (Etienne and Baour  
Lormain. (Music in collaboration with  
Berton, Kreutzer and Paër).  
1816. La Journée aux Aventures (3 acts). (Cappelle and Mezières).  
1822. Valentine de Milan (4 acts). (Bouilly).  
This work, left unfinished by Méhul, was  
revised and completed by his nephew and  
pupil Daussoigne.

*Other Works*

1794. Le Chant du Depart. (M. J. Chénier).  
 — Hymne du 9 Thermidor. (M. J. Chénier).  
 — Chant des Victoires. (M. J. Chénier).  
 1795. Chant funèbre à la mémoire de Ferraud.  
 (Baour-Lormain).  
 1797. Hymne à la Paix. (C. Pipelet).  
 — Le Chant du retour. (M. J. Chénier).  
 1800. Chant national du 14 Juillet. (Fontanes).  
 1808. Chant du retour pour la Grande Armée.  
 (Arnault).  
 1810. Cantata for the marriage of Napoleon and  
 Marie Louise. (Arnault).  
 1811. Chant d'Ossian for the birth of the King  
 of Rome. (Arnault).  
 1811. Chant lyrique (for the unveiling of Na-  
 poleon's statue). (Arnault).

Three overtures (one for brass instruments, one  
 for grand orchestra and one entitled "burlesque").

A solemn Mass for four voices.

*Domine salvam fac rempublicam* for two choirs  
 and two orchestras.

Four symphonies for grand orchestra. *Anacre-  
 on's Ode XIX.* and early sonatas for harpsichord,  
 songs, etc.

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CHAPTER VI

JEAN FRANCOIS LESUEUR

1760-1837

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## CHAPTER VI

JEAN FRANÇOIS LESUEUR

1760-1837

LESUEUR was a contemporary of Méhul (whom, however, he outlived by some twenty years) and one of the little group of musicians who came unscathed through the storms of the Revolution. With Méhul and Boieldieu he first came into notice during the eventful decade 1790-1800. Lesueur's real importance lies not in his own compositions, but in his stimulating influence upon others. He was a musician with theories who wrote about his art, a fervent apostle of Programme music, convinced that music should be, essentially and before all things, imitative, descriptive. The most important and interesting result of his teaching is embodied in his pupil Berlioz, who was greatly influenced by his ideas. "Lesueur's best work is Berlioz," says M. Octave Fouque.

Born about 1760 in the little hamlet Plessier near Abbeville, Jean François Lesueur was of humble birth, his parents being poor peasant folk.<sup>1</sup> Natur-

<sup>1</sup> Some biographers say he was a grandson of the painter of the same name.

ally he had no opportunities of hearing music other than that supplied by the village church (it had no organ) or rustic songs. His musical faculty awoke suddenly one day when, for the first time, he heard the strains of a military band as it marched through the village. The blending of different instruments flashed like a dazzling vision on the little boy (he was only about seven years old). "Many tunes at once!" (*plusieurs airs à la fois*) he exclaimed, and ran after the wonderful music far beyond the village, until he fell down exhausted.

His parents, impressed by this incident, placed him at a monastery school where he remained several years.

There was no lack of schools of music in France at that time, but the teaching they offered was very poor, far inferior to contemporary standards in either Italy or Germany. There was no instruction in counterpoint or harmony at this particular school, but "music" on general lines was taught in the mornings and Latin in the afternoons. Lesueur had the advantage of both.<sup>1</sup> At the age of sixteen he was sent to another monastery and

<sup>1</sup> Under the monarchy the church or monastic schools were the only places where music was taught. Every cathedral had its school (there were about 130 cathedrals in France), and many monasteries had their schools of music. Parents had to sign an agreement that their children should remain ten years in these schools, after which some pupils became priests, others organists or singers, others again took up secular music in orchestras or theatres. Altogether there were some 800 schools of music in France, but there was no universal standard and the quality of instruction depended entirely on the teachers. Musicians suffered from the lack of systematic instruction (e.g., Rameau and Grétry).

choir school at Seiz in Normandy, and presently was studying in Paris under the Abbé Roze, being himself an underteacher at the Innocents. (His own idea of study at this time was Plain song). At this youthful age he was passed on as choirmaster to Dijon, Le Mans, Tours; 1784 finds him back in Paris as Maître de Chapelle at the Innocents, after passing an examination conducted by Grétry, Gossec and Philidor. The last-named was the Director of the "Concerts Spirituels" (religious music) and at these Lesueur's Motets were performed. In the same year he set to music an Ode by J. B. Rousseau, which was highly praised. Sacchini and other friends urged him to write for the stage, and he did, in fact, write an opera, *Télémaque*, but it was not produced. Ecclesiastical music interested him more than any other at this period; he was anxious to make the music of church ceremonial of greater importance, more dramatic in style than it had hitherto been. He began to carry out his ideas after being appointed to the important post of *Maître de Chapelle* at Notre Dame (1786), and a few years later introduced music on a grand scale. At Easter, for instance, he was allowed to engage an orchestra of 100 performers and singers from the opera.<sup>1</sup>

But this was only a small portion of his dreams. With the idea of stimulating emotional and relig-

<sup>1</sup> Lully, it may be recalled, had been the first to introduce other instruments besides the organ into church services, in spite of opposition.

ious feeling, he tried to illustrate the Liturgy and the various events celebrated on festival days by musical illustration, really a kind of religious music Drama. One of his masses was in fact preceded by an overture. These novelties attracted crowds, especially of the poorer classes, and Lesueur's services began to be known as the Beggars' Opera ("L'Opéra des Gueux"). Marie Antoinette was interested in the innovation and she, too, came to the services. But the church dignitaries disapproved, finding such experiments too costly; presently the Chapter cut down the orchestra and insisted that Lesueur should take orders. (He took the title "Abbé," but refused to become a priest).

In reply to criticisms he wrote a pamphlet explaining his ideas: "*Essai de musique sacrée, ou musique motivée et méthodique pour la fête de Noël*" (1786). In this and subsequent articles he shews himself an ardent champion of Programme music. He wishes to see imitative, descriptive music for each solemnity of the church service. For Easter Day, e.g., an instrumental prelude with passages from a Motet describing the Resurrection; Mary Magdalen and the Apostles, the Choir of the Faithful are all represented by soli or chorus.

For Christmas he produced a kind of descriptive oratorio on the birth of Christ: music of a calm and pastoral character indicating the peaceful night with shepherds tending their flocks; then the sud-

den appearance of angels, the alarm of the shepherds, their march to Bethlehem. The music for this "Plan pour la messe de Noël" still exists.

The Overture begins with prophecies relating to the birth of the Messiah: "An imposing passage performed by all strings and wind instruments, mingled with the sombre strains of trombones, whose timbre (according to several authors) greatly resembles that of the religious trumpets of the ancient High Priests. After which three trombones alone herald . . . a music with solemn gloomy harmony, inspiring a certain reverential awe. Then a voice announces in prophetic tones *ecce dies veniunt*, etc. The march of the Shepherds is to be "religious yet joyous," in Sapphic metre. To this the shepherds sing "laudamus te," whilst altos, 'cellos and horns are heard in the familiar carol, "Où s'en vont ces gais bergers?" ("Whither go these joyous shepherds?"). (Lesueur used familiar airs in order to attract the attention of ordinary folk).

The music of church festivals under Lesueur thus became a kind of oratorio with motets and a large orchestra, entailing an immense amount of work. The young Abbé had not only to train his choirs and musicians but to make arrangements for housing and feeding many of the orchestra and singers. At Easter (1787), when the festival extended over several days, he had only time to sleep an hour or two at a time for nearly a fortnight. He was ill paid for all this and the dis-

approval of church dignitaries complicated matters. They were anxious to get rid of him and when he applied for temporary leave of absence (intending to go to England and make a little money by giving concerts), the Chapter accepted his temporary resignation as final.

Thus Lesueur found himself stranded. Many critics, however, approved of his ideas and Chénier wrote a poem expressing his admiration for the church and the musician who had done so much in its service. More practical help came from a Canon of Notre Dame, who offered him a home in his country house. Here he found shelter for a couple of years.

A librettist had already suggested the greater possibilities of opera and in this country retreat Lesueur now began to write dramatic music, composing *La Caverne ou le Repentir* (a plot which afterwards attracted Méhul).

The plot (taken from Gil Blas) was as gloomy as its title and frankly melodramatic. A young girl, prisoner in a cave of banditti, is protected by the noble and generous chief, who turns out to be her brother. The setting of the opera was unusual, the stage being divided (as in *Aïda*) into two storeys, with the cavern below and a forest above. Lesueur, who was fond of double effects of music as well as of double scenes, introduced a quartette above with a chorus of bandits below. *La Caverne* was extremely well received (February 1793) and remained on the bills throughout this



year of Terror, although the title "Abbé" was not calculated to make the composer popular. For a time he was "suspect."

In the following year *Paul et Virginie ou le Triomphe de la Vertu* was also a success. The scene of the tempest was considered very fine, although later generations find it childish. It shares the fate of descriptive music, so largely dependent on the means of expression; in the words of M. Fouque, "descriptive music does not grow old, it disappears." (In this opera the story has a happy ending, Virginie being rescued by Paul). *Télémaque dans l'Ile de Calypso ou le Triomphe de la sagesse* (May 1796) was another triumph, also for the composer, in spite of its unsuccessful imitation of Greek music (which always attracted Lesueur). The overture in the Hypo Dorian mode was praised by Berlioz.

In other respects Lesueur prospered during this decade, being appointed Professor at the Ecole de la garde national (1793) and Inspecteur at the Conservatoire on its foundation in 1795. With Méhul, Gossec, Catel, he drew up plans of study, etc. But his own pamphlet, "Projet d'un plan général de l'instruction musicale en France" (1801), raised a storm of disapproval and was the cause of his dismissal from this post in the following year. He was once more reduced to poverty, all the more keenly felt because he was at this time supporting his old father and other relatives. In absolute despair and by way of protest against

the action of the Conservatoire and the Opera he wrote a curious letter to Napoleon, with a copy of his pamphlet, a letter which shews something of Lesueur's mental outlook, that of the recluse grotesquely out of touch with real life. (He uses throughout the classical "thou.").

"To the greatest of men!

"Will you grant me a few moments of the time which you employ for the world's happiness? I should never stoop to exchange the sentiments of honour and independence for the lying arts of courtiers. Let someone read to you the advice which the Graces and Orpheus proffer through my feeble utterance. Terpander and Timotheus argued of such things before Alexander. The hero listened with interest. He was just towards them. You owe me justice, I await it.

"Salut et respect,

"LESUEUR."

Probably Napoleon never received this epistle, but not long afterwards Paisiello returned to Naples, leaving his post at court vacant. This post, Director of Music to the First Consul (the one declined by Méhul) was now bestowed on Lesueur and henceforth his position was assured.

His opera *Ossian ou les Bardes* was performed at the Opéra with immense success (10 July 1804). Napoleon (an enthusiastic admirer of "Ossian's" poems) was present at the first performance, sent

for Lesueur and made him sit in his box "to enjoy his triumph." Next day he received the Cross of the Legion of Honour and a snuff box containing a large sum of money and engraved with the words, "The Emperor of the French to the author of the *Bardes*."

The opera was a success financially as well as musically, the receipts for the first performance (18,000 francs) being considered phenomenal. Thus by a sudden turn of fortune's wheel Lesueur became a rich and successful man. Two years later he married a woman of intelligence, Mlle. Adeline Jamart de Courchamps, who made him an excellent wife, being endowed with the practical common sense which Lesueur so painfully lacked.<sup>1</sup>

For Napoleon's Coronation (December 2 1804) he composed a *Te Deum* and Mass, and in 1807 he produced another opera, *le Triomphe de Trajan*, really celebrating the clemency of the Emperor towards Prince Hatzfeldt, who had conspired against his life. The plot, in which many persons of the highest rank were implicated, was discovered before it could be carried out, and Princess Hatzfeldt hastened to implore the Emperor's pardon for her husband. Napoleon threw the documents implicating him into the fire, saying, "No one can accuse your husband, Madame, you see there are no proofs against him." This incident inspired the librettist Esménard for his opera *Trajan*. It was magnificently staged and aroused immense enthusi-

<sup>1</sup> Napoleon and Josephine signed his *Contrat de Mariage* (1806).

asm, the allusion to Napoleon being recognised by everybody. *Trajan* was performed more than a hundred times and was afterwards revived, always with great success. Lesueur's *Marche triomphale* became very popular.

Other works of this period were his religious music for the Tuileries chapel and cantatas on biblical subjects (Ruth and Naomi, Rachel, Deborah). More ambitious was his *Mort d'Adam et son Apothéose*, performed (21 March 1809) with magnificent scenery. This "antediluvian" subject and many peculiarities in its treatment gave cause for much hostile criticism, but the music contains some beautiful passages in spite of the extreme simplicity of harmony and instrumentation. It is said that Beethoven, reading the score shortly before his death, thought some of the music "angelic."

In 1813 Lesueur succeeded Grétry as member of the Institut. The downfall of Napoleon, to whom he was sincerely and devotedly attached, came as a crushing blow to the musician, although it did not deprive him of his position or honour. He was appointed Surintendant of the Chapel of Louis XVIII, although he made no secret of his unshaken loyalty to Napoleon. He refused a Court decoration higher than the one he had received from the Emperor, saying that he wished for nothing higher than that of the Legion of Honour bestowed by his late master, and the new court respected his loyalty. From 1st January 1818, he was Professor of Composition at the Conservatoire; his lectures were

brilliant and he proved himself a splendid teacher, inspiring and stimulating his pupils in an extraordinary degree. He respected the individuality in each, seeking to develop each pupil's natural bent rather than insisting on stereotyped routine. Fourteen of his pupils gained the *Grand Prix*; among them were Berlioz, Ambroise Thomas, Gounod. (Ambroise Thomas, who was nervous and timid, he always called his "sensitive" note). Apart from the relation of master and pupil there was a strong tie of sympathy and friendship between Lesueur and Berlioz, although, when the latter grew older, he pronounced some of his master's theories "antiquated" and his teaching of harmony absolutely lost time. When Beethoven's C Minor Symphony (the musical touchstone in those days) was performed in Paris for the first time, Berlioz, immediately and wildly enthusiastic, was impatient with Lesueur's attitude of reserve. And Berlioz kept his own later works from his old master as long as possible—a significant attitude. But, although in technical details and means of expression Berlioz so far surpassed his master, he was deeply influenced by his ideals and theories. "Berlioz is only a successful Lesueur, and Lesueur an unrealised Berlioz," says M. Fouque,—“Lesueur may be regarded as a prophet, a forerunner of Berlioz.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Another critic, M. Laffon, considers his influence upon Gounod to have been equally great, especially as regards modulation. Lesueur, he says, was the first to teach modulating by means of the diminished seventh chord and its enharmonic changes.

Lesueur died 6th October, 1837.

Fifteen years later his pupil, Ambroise Thomas, composed a "Song of Triumph" for the inauguration of his statue in Abbeville.

In personal appearance Lesueur was not unlike an ascetic monk. He had fine clearly cut features with an expression of nobility and sweetness; he was extraordinarily pale and thin.

Very upright and sincere, he was almost childishly unworldly; in his lessons he never failed to mention his three ideals: Homer, the Bible, Napoleon. He was a loyal and devoted friend, witness the instance of his allowing a pupil (one Marc), to bring out an opera in his (Lesueur's) name in order to "give the young composer a better chance."

Lesueur's music, like himself, is a mixture of simplicity and complexity. He was a poet, a philosopher and a writer, as well as a musician, and was full of ideas which were too difficult of execution, especially with his primitive notions of harmony. His *chants* are composed of concords; severe in style, he even modulates with concords, never with a Seventh. Usually he keeps one harmony through an entire bar. But his effects were intended for big churches and in cathedrals with vaulted roofs they were at home. Even Cherubini, whose music was so much more scholarly, varied—in fact developed—far superior to Lesueur's in the concert room, even he acknowledged that Lesueur's music was much more impressive than his own



when heard in its proper setting, within the stone walls of a vast cathedral. Gounod called Lesueur's music "Mediæval frescoes, byzantine mosaics," and Berlioz said that his "Ruth" was so true in its antique colouring that one forgets the poor-ness of Lesueur's musical design, his imitations of old Italian dramatic style and the childish weak-ness of his instrumentation. In any case Lesueur was the first to introduce expressive religious music in France. He disliked fugues "which describe nothing and whose only aim is to display the empty science of counterpoint and the conquest of difficulties," (he wrote in 1787). It is remarkable that he never changed his convictions and opinions on musical matters. When quite a young man his ideals were formulated and he remained true to them all his life. To understand his musical atti-tude one must remember that when Lesueur was a young man the works of Sebastian Bach were scarcely known in France. Haydn and Mozart had not yet produced their best works and were also unknown; his own musical education had been of the scantiest. His ideas were his own and dis-tinctly modern in spirit, although he did not possess technical knowledge sufficient to carry them out on modern lines. He found it necessary to distribute leaflets explaining the music, when his oratorios or music dramas were performed; some of his ideas being absolutely incompatible with musical expression and some of the music impossible to understand without explanation.

Later he wrote rules for composing expressive music, for the guidance of pupils.<sup>1</sup>

Such instructions sound obvious nowadays. In setting to music the Psalm, "By the Waters of Babylon," for instance, the music should convey the idea of the rushing river with its waterfalls, the winds, the Hebrews' sad songs, and their musical instruments. He suggests such devices as syncopated figures, strings *vibrato*, etc. The music for Christmas—already described—(still extant) is on the same lines. Unfortunately Lesueur did not show the same dramatic instinct in his operas; neither he nor Berlioz were good operatic composers.

Lesueur's opponents disapproved of his literary attempts. A musician should keep to his music, they said, and in those days musicians were supposed to be lacking both in general education and common sense. This made him indignant. A musician was not expected to quote Latin! "Are we then forbidden education?" He showed that he was quite able to quote Latin authors and wrote learnedly of derivations of words and on Greek music—a subject which fascinated him deeply. He disliked the piano intensely, as a mechanical in-

1 "Exposé d'une musique, une, imitative et particulière à chaque solennité; où l'auteur à la suite de ce qu'il a déjà publié à ce sujet, donne à ceux de ses élèves qui se destinent à composer la musique de nos temples les préceptes qu'il leur a cru nécessaires pour mettre le plus de *poésie*, de *peinture* et d'*expression* possible dans leurs ouvrages. Il donne aussi le plan d'une musique propre à la fête de l'Assomption."



strument without colour, a dislike shared by Berlioz.

Lesueur took part with other musicians in composing music for the Fêtes of the Revolution. He was requested by Lucien Bonaparte (minister of the Interior) to compose a Hymn for 1 Vendémiaire An IX, the occasion being a grand national fête in honour of Peace. Méhul's famous Hymn with its three orchestras was now surpassed by Lesueur, who employed four orchestras for his Symphonic Ode. Each orchestra expressed a different emotion: "the joyous murmur of the crowd returning from some solemnity," another in more animated strains, a third expressing the highest "exaltation" of huge crowds; the fourth has unfortunately disappeared without a trace. Sarette was ordered to publish this composition, but neglected to do so, and we possess no compositions by Lesueur for orchestra alone. He produced music for *Chants* dedicated to Agriculture, to Old Age, and a "Dithyrambic Hymn for the triumphal entry of objects of art and science collected in Italy (1798)."

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CHAPTER VII  
LUIGI CHERUBINI  
1760-1842



## CHAPTER VII

LUIGI CHERUBINI

1760—1842

CHERUBINI is usually reckoned among the musicians of France, and he allied himself more to the French School than to any other, but in reality he was never completely representative of French music. His opera was neither wholly French nor wholly Italian, and he exercised no lasting influence upon operatic music in either France or Italy.

He is one of those who close an epoch rather than begin one, resuming in himself all the learning and technical skill of his predecessors, producing masterly works on well-known lines, especially on those of old Italian Church Music, but he did not found a school of church music any more than one of Opera. "The last and noblest Roman in the purely classical style of art," his music was perfect, intellectual, noble, but French popular taste found it too "learned" (the fatal reproach levelled at Rameau). Cherubini's aim was pure music, not impressionism or programme music. Critics reproached him for adopting the

German style which prefers instrumental effects to expressive melody, and said it was "easier to produce harmonies and noise, effects of purely technical calculation, than to create song." The word *tudesque* always conveys this idea in French criticism from Rameau downwards.

Cherubini was of course appreciated by musicians—and in fact more in Germany than in France—which is not surprising. Beethoven admired his skill, earnestness and depth of feeling, even thought him the "greatest opera composer living"; the two became friends during Cherubini's stay in Vienna, 1805. Haydn, too, was enthusiastic, but the very qualities which made him respected by serious musicians were against his becoming a popular favourite. Chiefly and especially, however, because he was no innovator, had no new message to deliver. He was not of those whose originality makes them unpopular at first, but who win through by sheer force of new and fertile ideas. Cherubini was classical, a great worker on traditional lines—a follower, not a prophet—and as such without vivifying influence. Although he became naturalised in France, identified with the little band of musicians who passed through the Revolution, composing with them the Republican festival music and sharing their dangers (at the time of the execution of Louis XVI Cherubini was hiding in a monastery near Rouen), although he took high rank as a musician, his music was never popular. It was too serious, too dry, too

"learned." Cherubini came to Paris at the age of 28 and remained there for the rest of his long life.

Born in Florence (14 September 1760), the son of a harpsichord player at the Pergola Theatre, Luigi Cherubini (his names were Maria Luigi Carlo Zenobi Salvatore) had a sound musical training on Italian lines, chiefly under Sarti at Bologna, a severe master of the traditional Contrapuntal school, terribly pedantic. Among other things he made his pupils copy immense quantities of old musical compositions. The habit of copying clung to Cherubini and some thousands of such MS. folios were found in his study when he died. His early operas in Italy were considered even then very "solid" and learned, but he was sufficiently known to be invited to London and was appointed Composer to the King (1784), a post which he only held one year, however. Two of his operas, performed at the King's Theatre, Haymarket, were failures (1785) and in 1788 he went to Paris. He arrived at the time when Marie Antoinette's Italian hair dresser was "running" opera, and through him obtained the post of Musical Director to the Italian Opera.

His opera *Lodoïska* (18 July 1791) aroused controversy, but the composer was henceforth recognised, even famous. The scene was laid in Poland, the unhappy country then beginning to offer dramatic possibilities. The heroine, Lodoïska, is a prisoner in the castle of Dourlinski who loves



her, whilst she prefers Floriska. Her lover comes in disguise, pretending to be her brother and begging for her release that she may return home. Dourlinski's suspicions are aroused, and he discovers Floriska drugging the soldiers. But, when all seems lost, the castle is suddenly stormed by Tartars and Lodoïska escapes with her lover. Cherubini's music was rich in orchestral colouring and harmonic combinations, far superior in every way to the weak, trivial music then in vogue. *Lodoïska* was performed 200 times in one year, in spite of the large numbers of the public who preferred the lighter style of Paisiello and other Italian composers. The struggles of Cherubini to raise opera to a higher level recall in some measure the old war of Gluckistes and Piccinnistes, although in those revolutionary days questions of music became of secondary importance and the struggle was perhaps more one of conflicting instincts than of conscious partisanship and aims.

In 1794 *Eliza*, on a stupid libretto by St. Cyr, introduced the Monastery of St. Bernard, the Prior and monks, travellers seeking shelter, amongst whom Florindo, a disconsolate lover, and Eliza, whom he believes faithless. After due misunderstandings Florindo is overwhelmed by an avalanche, rescued, reconciled to his lady. Cherubini's music was wasted on this subject and not even the singing of the famous Madame Scio could save it from failure.

In the following year (1795) came Cherubini's

appointment as Inspecteur and Professor of Counterpoint at the Conservatoire de Musique, and in the same year his marriage to a Frenchwoman, Mlle. Cécile Tourette, the beautiful daughter of a Court musician. At the Conservatoire he was associated with Méhul and other friends among the musicians with whom he had shared the perils of the Reign of Terror. An incident in the preceding year shows that nationality was not respected during that period. Cherubini was in the street one day when a band of lawless citizens came along, singing and shouting. Recognising Cherubini as the artist once in favour with royalty, they insisted that he should lead them. He refused until a friend, caught by the same mob, hastily thrust a violin into his hands and told him to play. The two musicians were dragged about the whole day by the crowd. In the evening they were seen mounted on barrels playing, literally, for dear life, whilst a banquet was going on in the market-place around them.

*Medée* (1797) contains some of the best of Cherubini's dramatic music: The Bridal March in Act II and the Storm scene, in which Medea makes a fine entry, are held as masterpieces, and there is a beautiful duet for Medea and Jason. The overture, like other overtures by Cherubini, is a fine example of pure music (not a "programme" overture). The plot follows the lines of the Greek tragedy. Unfortunately the part of Medea was not well written for the voice, the famous Madame

Scio found it very trying, and, partly for this reason, the opera was seldom staged, even in Germany where Cherubini was so well appreciated.<sup>1</sup>

Cherubini's most popular success, a masterpiece of its kind, was his two-act opera, *Les deux journées* ("The two days"), produced 1800. The plot was of human interest; the music more melodious, expressive and light than that of *Medée*. The scene depicted Paris about 1647 and the story concerned a French Minister of Parliament threatened by Mazarin with arrest, who escapes from the city by the help of a water carrier. (In Germany the opera is known as the "Water Carrier"). Bouilly, who had gained several years' experience by this time, had at last written a really good libretto: Goethe, at any rate, considered it excellent. The music ranks among Cherubini's most inspired, brilliantly orchestrated and rich in harmonic colour. There are only a few solo airs; chorus and concerted pieces being the strong feature of this work.

Beethoven<sup>2</sup> admired it so much that he kept the score constantly by him, whilst Spohr sat up all

<sup>1</sup> *Medée* was performed at Her Majesty's Theatre, London, as late as 1865 with Mlle. Tietjens as Medea.

<sup>2</sup> Although Beethoven admired Cherubini so greatly, it does not appear that Cherubini on his side understood Beethoven or his aims fully. He observed that "Beethoven was always brusque" in manner and after hearing the first performance of *Fidelio* in Vienna, he merely said of the Overture (Leonora in C) that one could not tell what key it was in from beginning to end. Yet he recognised Beethoven as a mighty genius, beside whom he was "only a small boy."

night studying it and declared that this music was the first which inspired him to compose.

From *Anacréon*, three years later, the overture again may be singled out.

In response to an invitation to write an opera for Vienna and conduct it in person, Cherubini composed *Faniska*, a three-act opera, performed (25 February 1806) in Vienna. The Emperor and a splendid retinue did honour to the performance and the composer; mingling in the humbler crowd the presence of Beethoven and Haydn was at least an equal honour. *Faniska* was received with enthusiasm by the music-loving Viennese. High and low, musicians and critics, all were unanimous in praise.

The plot of *Faniska* is absurdly like that of *Lodoïska* (libretto by Sonnleithner from a French melodrama called "The Polish Mines"). *Lodoïska*, by the way, was very popular in Vienna, and the similarity of the subjects was due to the universal sympathy and enthusiasm for Poland. At this period the Poles were fighting heroically for freedom, and Western Europe sympathised with them. In *Faniska* the heroine, by way of variety, is married, and with her infant daughter is imprisoned in the "tyrant's" castle. Her husband comes to the rescue. With the improbable ingenuity of the stage, he pretends to be a messenger bearing the tidings of his own death, and thus gains admittance, but he betrays himself on seeing his little daughter, and all three are cast into subterranean dungeons. Their attempts to escape are frustrated (once they

try to get out of the window, another time they are hauled up in baskets, all clumsy expedients for the stage), but finally devoted friends storm the castle with an army of soldiers and rescue the prisoners. A Viennese criticism remarked that the music, "except where it is too full of art and skill, is perfectly worthy of the master; strong, deep, fiery and characteristic, supported by all the resources of harmony, sometimes even too richly supported."<sup>1</sup> This passage is worth quoting because it seems to sum up nearly all criticism of Cherubini's music. Cherubini had brought his wife and three children to Vienna and would in all probability have settled there, but scarcely was the success of *Faniska* assured than war broke out between France and Austria. After the battle of Austerlitz the French entered the capital and Napoleon took up his quarters in Schönbrunn. Finding Cherubini on the spot, he made him Director of Music, that is, of the daily routine of Court concerts, etc., a post which took up time, but brought with it neither money nor fame. Music in the domain of opera came to a stand-still, no one went to the theatre in those fateful days. Beethoven's *Fidelio* was performed a week after Napoleon's arrival to an almost empty house, (afterwards withdrawn and "shelved" for several years). . . . It was certainly Cherubini's unlucky star which brought Napoleon to Vienna just at that moment. Disappointed in his hopes of success, broken down and ill at the failure of this apparently

<sup>1</sup> *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*. June, 1806.

promising visit, he returned to Paris, resolved to write no more operas.

It was unfortunate for Cherubini that Napoleon never liked him or his music, and, in consequence, ungenerously refused to help or distinguish him in any way. Perhaps Cherubini was tactless; he was notoriously blunt and rather irritable in temper; certainly he took no pains to conciliate the Emperor, whom he pronounced an entirely unmusical nature. "Napoleon did not like music because he did not understand it. To him it was a noise which affected his nerves disagreeably." Cherubini once told him, "Sire, you like music which does not hinder you from thinking about State affairs." Further he declared, "He demanded of me music devoid of common sense, and, as I was responsible for the arrangements of the concerts, I would not give in to him. Then he was annoyed at my resistance and made satirical remarks which I pretended not to understand."<sup>1</sup> An amusing picture of the struggle between the Man of Destiny and an obstinate musician. "I cannot understand your music, it is so noisy and complicated—too learned and too *tudesque*," Napoleon told Cherubini. He had said the same thing to Méhul, who was not at all offended by the criticism. Probably Napoleon, genuinely interested in most things, would have enjoyed an argument about music, but Cherubini replied coldly that he could not adapt his music to his hearer's intellectual ca-

<sup>1</sup> Pougin in "Ménestrel."



capacity. Napoleon was always ungenerous, even petty, in his treatment of the great composer. He refused him the "Legion of Honour" when Gossec, Méhul and Grétry were decorated (1802), and Cherubini remained simply a salaried professor at the Conservatoire, a poor man until he was nearly sixty, for his operas brought in very little money. He only received due recognition in his old age after Napoleon's downfall.<sup>1</sup> Thoroughly discouraged as regards opera, he even left Paris for a time and retired to the country as the guest of the Prince de Chimay. For a time he gave up composing and devoted himself to the study of botany, perhaps inspired by the example of his friend Méhul, who found solace in flowers from the disappointments of an artistic career. In this retreat Cherubini was asked to compose a mass for the little church at Chimay. At first he refused, but afterwards composed a short mass for three voices, which was performed by the village choir with simple orchestra (string quartet, one flute, two horns, two clarinets, one bassoon).

The mass was such a success that it was afterwards performed in Paris (enlarged and with fuller instrumentation). This was in 1809.

Cherubini now seemed to have found his real vocation and composed beautiful church music, such as the Requiem Mass (C minor), which he wrote for

<sup>1</sup> During the "Hundred Days" Napoleon made a tardy recognition by bestowing the "Legion of Honour" upon him.



the anniversary of Louis XVI's death (performed in St. Denis, 1817).

Berlioz declared that this was, on the whole, Cherubini's greatest work, surpassing all his other compositions in form, variety of conception and sublimity. "The *Agnus Dei* in *decesendo* surpasses all that has been written of this kind. The vocal style is clear and sharply outlined, the instrumentation richly coloured and strong." The Grand Mass (D minor), composed during 1811, is the longest mass ever composed, a monument of learning and skill, yet devotional in spirit. Another beautiful work was the "Coronation" Mass (in A), performed in Rheims Cathedral at the Coronation of Charles X. Of this, too, Berlioz wrote with enthusiasm, especially of the "sublime" Communion March. In all church music Cherubini displayed his absolute mastery of form and of all musical technique, polyphonic and harmonic, with noble expression and breadth of style. His masses were in fact monuments—to the past, however—to the purest traditions of Italian church music. (His was "the purest church music since Palestrina"). But he did not found a school of sacred music, any more than one of opera; he remained a master of the classical, severely aloof from the operatic tendency in church music which was then coming into favour in Italy, to culminate in Rossini's *Stabat Mater*. Had Cherubini lived later he would doubtless have been a great composer of symphonic and other orchestral music.

He tempted fortune again (vainly) with two small operas, *Pygmalion* and *Le Crescendo* (1809 and 1810). A larger work, *Les Abencerages*, on a weak libretto by Bouilly (1813) had also no success, although long afterwards Mendelssohn discovered many beauties in the score, writing enthusiastically about its "original phrasing, its extraordinary refinement and delicacy. I cannot admire it enough or feel sufficiently grateful to the grand old man for composing this music. Besides, it is all so free."

A final operatic venture was *Ali Baba*, produced 1833, when Cherubini was over seventy (he had originally commenced it in his youth under the title "Kourkourgi").

The dramatic story of the Forty Thieves had grown into an inordinately long opera (four acts and a prologue), very well written and full of musical scholarship, but alas! not sufficiently living to become popular. It was, in a word, dull. Berlioz was ostentatiously bored by the "operatic fossil."

Cherubini, Professor, Examiner and Director of the Conservatoire, was a fine teacher, a purist, even a pedant, intolerant of shallowness and triviality. He condemned as decadent compositions which were merely pleasing, especially when lacking thorough mastery of technique. "A beacon warning from the trivial and tawdry," says Professor Frederick Crowest. He was absolute master in the art of polyphonic music and wrote a "Treatise on Counterpoint and Fugue" (1835) for his pupils,

Among them were Auber, Carafa, Halévy, Zimmermann. Berlioz, when a student, delighted in making the irascible Cherubini angry. As a revolutionary Modern he was proud to "shock the old master by my heterodoxy in the matter of harmony and rhythm." Cherubini's thick Italian accent clung to him all his life and was the subject of irreverent mirth. But his pupils were devoted to their splendid teacher and he took a fatherly interest in them. With Cherubini art was religion. In all seriousness he said to Boieldieu *à propos* of his early, facile successes: "Are you not ashamed to enjoy such splendid success when you have done so little to deserve it?" The younger man admitted the justice of this criticism and set himself to study under Cherubini, to the great advantage of his later works. The two became firm friends. About 1798 they collaborated in three little operas, and often in "occasional" works for the Revolution.

In spite of his caustic temper Cherubini had many devoted friends, among the musicians especially, and always proved himself sincere, loyal, generous in his friendships. He stood by Lesueur, for instance, in his early struggles, and many years later (in 1816), when offered the post of Surintendant of the King's music (under Louis XVIII), he refused unless he could share it with Lesueur, which was permitted. Like all who live to a great age, he had the misfortune of outliving most of his contemporaries: Méhul, to whom he was greatly attached, Catel ("Mon bien-aimé Catel"), Boiel-

dieu, not to speak of older comrades like Grétry and Gossec. He suffered bereavements in his own family too; the death of his son-in-law was an especially heavy blow to the old man. At the age of 82 he resigned his post at the Conservatoire and died shortly afterwards, 15 March 1842 "The last and noblest Roman in the purely classical style of art,"<sup>1</sup> his character, like his music, was of rare integrity and nobility.

Among the pieces composed by Cherubini for the Fêtes of the Revolution the most important is the *Hymne du Panthéon*, words by Chénier (1794). A *Hymne funèbre* for the death of General Hoche was performed with scenic illustrations (1797).

A *Chant républicain pour la fête du 10 Août* 1795, with orchestral accompaniment, is strong and energetic, but not arresting or inspiring. Shorter pieces were *Le Salpêtre républicain* ("Descendons dans nos souterrains"), performed at the opening of the Saltpetre works;<sup>2</sup> Hymn for the *Fête de la reconnaissance* (Gratitude), which was to replace Whitsuntide; and a Hymn to Youth (for Easter, for which Cherubini used the melody of one of his Italian Nocturnes).

<sup>1</sup> Baillot.

<sup>2</sup> *Citoyens* "digging fiercely, each in his own cellar, for saltpetre," (Carlyle).

# WORKS BY CHERUBINI

(after his arrival in France)

## *Operas*

- 1788. Démophon.
- 1791. Lodoïska.
- 1794. Eliza.
- 1797. Médée.
- 1798. L'Hôtellerie Portugaise.
- 1799. La Puntion.
- 1800. Les deux Jounées.
- 1803. Anacréon.
- 1806. Faniska.
- 1809. Pygmalion.
- 1810. Le Crescendo.
- 1813. Les Abencérages.
- 1833. Ali Baba.
- 1808-1825. Eight Masses.
- 1816 and 1836. Two Requiem Masses.

*Vocal Compositions:* Motets, Cantatas, Odes,  
Credos, Hymns.

*Instrumental Compositions:* Marches, Quartetts,  
Sonatas, one Symphony.

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                                  und Seine Werke.*  
Pierre, Constant   -     *Musique, fêtes et cérémonies  
                                  de la Révolution.*

CHAPTER VIII

FRANCOIS ADRIEN BOIELDIEU

1775-1834





## CHAPTER VIII

FRANÇOIS ADRIEN BOIELDIEU

1775-1834

BOIELDIEU (familiar to us chiefly, perhaps, by his overtures *Caliph of Bagdad* and *La Dame Blanche*) seems comparatively near our own day, and one is apt to forget that he was born before the French Revolution and achieved his first successes during the Reign of Terror. He was born 17th December 1775, in Rouen, in a house still standing at the corner of the Rue aux Ours (now adorned with a tablet and bust), and was christened, François Adrien, in the adjacent Church of St. Pierre. He came of a good *bourgeois* family; his father being not without literary tastes, for in after years he wrote verses for his son to set to music. Like most other young musicians of those pre-conservatoire days, François was placed in a choir school. This particular choir was attached to the Cathedral of Rouen, and the master, one Broche, was very severe and bad-tempered. Once, indeed, the little boy ran away from home after upsetting an inkpot upon a score he was copying for the master, not daring to face the consequences of his crime. The

great musical event of his boyhood was the performance of Grétry's *Barbe Bleue* at Rouen, which revealed a new world of music and determined him to compose opera. Soon he began to write songs, which found favour in his native town, and he was called upon to compose a Hymn to Reason, a reflection in provincial Rouen of the revolutionary fêtes in Paris (1793). Two small operas, *La Fille Coupable* (1793) and *Rosalie et Mirza* (1795), were merely youthful essays of no importance. At a concert of his own compositions young Boieldieu showed courage, when the public began to clamour for the *Carmagnole* and insisted that he should play it. Very pale but calm, he pushed away the clavecin in disgust and left the platform, an act of defiance which passed fortunately without dangerous consequences.

But even in those troubled times young artists were attracted to Paris inevitably. It was the only place where a career, a reputation might be made, where, as Voltaire called it, "immortalité" awaited genius. Like Lully, Rameau, Grétry, Méhul—and how many others—Boieldieu arrived in Paris to tempt fortune, poor, unknown, with nothing on his side save youth and genius. It is wonderful how many have succeeded; there is no record of those who fail.

Boieldieu was twenty when he left home, for some reason secretly. He travelled part of the way in a cart, spent the night in a shepherd's hut and arrived in the capital with the sum of 18 francs in

his pocket, the score of an opera, and his good looks. These were undeniable, judging from a charming full-length portrait (at the age of twenty-five). He is standing by a harpsichord in a blue swallow-tail coat, close fitting yellow trousers and high boots, smiling, gracious, handsome. Soon, however, the young man was in despair, seriously considering the idea of throwing himself into the river, when a messenger from home found him and supplied him with money and letters of introduction. After this things improved. He earned money by tuning pianos at Erard's, and sang his own songs at the receptions in the Erard *salon*. His gift for composing "romances," drawing-room songs, was greatly admired, and even the important Marmontel condescended to write verses for them. Boieldieu made friends with Méhul and Cherubini, with Grétry, now growing elderly but still at the height of his fame.

Already in September of the same year (1795) a small work, *La dot de Suzette* (Jaure), was fairly successful, and in 1797 *La famille Suisse* (Saint Just) followed. It was not difficult for young composers to get a hearing in those days, there being a constant demand for short, light novelties.<sup>1</sup> The first real success was scored by *Zoraïme et Zulnare*, a three-act opera on an Oriental subject (by way of local colouring two camels appeared on the stage,

<sup>1</sup> In 1791, after the King's flight, no fewer than 17 new theatres were opened. People sought relief and distraction from the terrible strain of those times.

an apparently perennial attraction). The titles of operas about this date mark the beginning of the vogue for foreign, especially eastern subjects. Boieldieu wrote no fewer than ten operas before he was 25, eight of them poor.

*Beniowski ou les exilés de Kamschatka* was produced 8th June 1800. The libretto was by Alexandre Duval, originally conceived in 1794 during the Terror. Duval was supping with the famous actor Talma, who had a nervous presentiment that he was about to be arrested as "suspect." By way of support Duval stayed the night with his friend, but he could not sleep, haunted by the fear of a nightly police raid. He found the "Memoirs of Beniowski" and lay awake reading the book, which he afterwards used for his libretto. The subject was warlike: soldiers, battles, the burning of the fort of Kamschatka, and Boieldieu's spirited overture was effective. Grétry especially praised a clever touch in a chorus of conspirators who become suddenly silent on the approach of a hostile officer.

The *Calife de Bagdad* (one act) followed only six months later, a brilliant success. This opera was quite French in all but the name; there was not even an attempt at Oriental colouring in music or staging. (It was after *le Calife* that Cherubini reproached Boieldieu with his too facile success). In spite of "doing nothing to deserve it" the *Calife* attained a record of 700 consecutive performances. His next work showed distinct progress in the art

of composition, however; the study with Cherubini had borne fruit.

*Ma tante Aurora ou le Roman interrompu* ("Aunt Aurora or the interrupted Novel") was slight, graceful, amusing (13th January 1803), on a libretto by Deslonchamps, a native of Rouen. There is distinct originality in the character of la Tante Aurora, a confirmed reader of romantic novels. She cannot believe that her niece is really in love, because her love seems an everyday affair, devoid of romance.

" Je ne vous vois jamais rêveuse ;  
Vous faites vos quatre repas.  
Non ! Non ! ma nièce  
Vous n'aimez pas."

In order to gain her consent Julie and Georges plan an elopement, attacks by brigands, etc., all duly romantic episodes, until Aunt Aurora, convinced at last, permits the marriage.

This brightly written and amusing work was an immense success, and Boieldieu at the age of 27 found himself a famous composer, with Paris practically at his feet. His joyous good nature, *verve* and charm made him a favourite everywhere. So far fortune had certainly smiled upon him.

Unfortunately he made a terrible mistake by marrying a certain Mlle. Clotilde of doubtful reputation (19th March 1802). The union was so wretched that Boieldieu escaped from it early in the following year by accepting an invitation to Russia,

where he was received with honour and appointed *Maître de Chapelle* to the Tsar. Further, he was under contract to compose three new operas every year. There was quite a French colony in St. Petersburg at this time and French music was the fashion. The Opera was run by French artists. Boiieldieu remained some eight years in Russia, until war was declared with France, when he was compelled to return to his own country. He wrote quite a number of operas during his sojourn, all entirely in the French style. His music shows no trace of Russian influence and he never seems to have been sufficiently interested in Russian folk songs to make any use of them, a point which shows the difference in outlook between the musicians of that period and more modern ones. His music, uninfluenced from without, remained stationary, and he was often greatly hampered by the want of French subjects for *libretti*. When composing *La jeune femme colère* (performed 1805) the librettist, Etienne, being in Paris, Boiieldieu found collaboration extremely difficult in those days of slow communication, when it took a fortnight for a letter to reach Paris from Russia. It never occurred to him to use Russian subjects, perhaps, indeed, they would not have been appreciated had he done so. (Mlle. Vigée Lebrun, who also had spent some time in Russia, before Boiieldieu, speaks of Russian folk-music as belonging solely to the people, "yet it possesses originality of a rather bar-

barous character; the songs are melodious and sad.'')

Boieldieu's first venture in St. Petersburg was *Aline reine de Golconde* (5 March 1804), an opera begun in Paris but dedicated to the Tsar. It was an Oriental subject like the *Calife*, but entirely French in treatment.

*Télémaque* was written to order for a Court festivity (1806), Désrois writing the libretto and Boieldieu the music, all within six weeks. The best of Boieldieu's operas of this period is *Les Voitures versées* ("Carriages upset"), on a subject taken from a French play, which happened to have been sent to Russia with other books. Dupaty was the author of this farcical comedy, which has for hero a poor country gentleman, obliged to live on his estate in the provinces, far from his adored Paris. In order to keep in touch with the "great world," he keeps his roads in shocking repair—the roads to Paris—and every day carriages, carts, diligences are overturned near his château. He offers hospitality to the unfortunate travellers, thus securing a constant stream of visitors of all kinds who cheer his solitude by their society and bring the latest news from Paris. Every variety of character arrives, the diligence especially providing a fine variety of "types." An amusing intrigue is woven around a young Parisian dandy who flirts with all the ladies in turn, sowing jealousy and discord, separating lovers, etc. Boieldieu was in his ele-



ment in this subject, his music was brilliant, full of life and gaiety, French in its elegance and finish.

Before the actual outbreak of war Boieldieu left Russia, being treated with the greatest consideration to the last, and departing laden with rich presents from the Tsar. As usual, he had conquered all hearts and everyone regretted his departure.

In the following year (1812) Boieldieu offered one of his best works to Paris: *Jean de Paris* (Saint Just), on an incident taken from mediæval times. The Dauphin of France, who is affianced to the Princesse of Navarre, wishes to gain her affection as a simple citizen, without royal rank or title. He travels as a rich *bourgeois*, "Monsieur Jean from Paris," with his servants and followers. The period favoured picturesque scenes and costumes; there were knights, troubadours, princesses, great ladies, the whole enlivened by humorous episodes. *Jean de Paris* was a great success in Paris and was soon a favourite in the provinces also. *Le nouveau seigneur du village*, "The new lord of the village" (Favières, 1813), was another light opera, brilliant and amusing, equally successful.

*Charles de France*, an "occasional" work in collaboration with others, (among them Hérold, Méhul's pupil, who made his début especially under Boieldieu's protection), was not remarkable in any other way. (1816).

Méhul died in the following year and Boieldieu succeeded him as member of the Institut.

*Le petit Chaperon rouge* (1818) was Red Riding Hood transformed into a village maiden pursued by the wolf in the form of the village *Seigneur*, Rodolphe. The overture is quite descriptive music.

At the age of fifty Boieldieu produced *La Dame Blanche*, his crowning work, the experience of a life time supported by his still brilliant and youthful genius (1825). "The White Lady" (its first title was *La Dame d'Avenel*) was a story of the romantic and mysterious, perhaps influenced by Scott, the scene laid among the "Mountaineers of Scotland." There are the old castle, the long lost heir, the beautiful and virtuous orphan brought up in the castle, the wicked steward; the young officer, George (the lost heir of the Avenels), visiting the home of his ancestors, sees the phantom White Lady, who gives him wise counsel. There is a famous Auction scene in the second act, in which George outbids the steward for his own estate. The White Lady reveals herself as Anna and George loves the beautiful apparition. The charming music was enthusiastically applauded by the public, the court, by Rossini (who was now in Paris), and Boieldieu received many marks of favour, including a pension. The opera was performed over 1,500 times. M. de Lassus has an interesting theory that the vicissitudes of the heir and property of Avenel were probably inspired by similar events in the families of aristocrats who fled from France on the outbreak of the Revolution, leaving their estates and property in the care of

stewards, honest or dishonest. There were many such episodes of lost heirs, sales of property, loyal servants, etc.

Another triumph for Boieldieu was his reception in his native city of Rouen, when *La Dame Blanche* was performed there in 1826. He received a tremendous ovation, and at its close the orchestra, inspired by the suitability of the occasion, struck up Grétry's famous old air, echo of past days, "Où peut-on être mieux qu'au sein de sa famille?"

This was Boieldieu's last great effort, the culminating point of his genius, also the culminating point of his fortunes. Henceforth he seemed as if exhausted, and even knew the bitterness of failure with an opera, *Les deux nuits* (on a stupid *libretto* thrust upon him by the indefatigable Bouilly). He was terribly disconcerted by the complete *fiasco* of this work (20 May 1829). The music, in many passages a repetition of previous works, was not strong enough to support a weak *libretto*.

With the fall of the king in 1830 Boieldieu lost his pension. His health no longer permitted him to teach at the Conservatoire, and in his declining years the diminution of an income (always lavishly spent) was painfully felt, until a pension of 3,000 francs granted by government made matters easier. He collaborated, but only in a very small measure, with several other writers (among them Auber, Carafa, Cherubini, Hérold) in an opera, *La Marquise de Brinvilliers* (1831).

A sad trial in Boieldieu's last years was his com-

plete loss of voice, the result of a form of laryngeal consumption. He who had always been fond of singing, who had even composed his melodies singing, found himself reduced to writing what he wished to say. He lived in strict retirement in the country, in a small house near the old ruined Abbey of Jarcy, finding some interest in gardening and in painting (he had always enjoyed making sketches and possessed decided talent as an artist). The chief consolation in his later years was his marriage, which had taken place in 1827 (after the death of his first wife), to a lady to whom he had been long attached, the sister of Mlle. Phillis, a singer who had interpreted many of his operas in Russia. This union was a very happy one. His son Adrien inherited some musical talent, at any rate he wrote with great facility a number of works.

Boieldieu died 8 October, 1834. At his funeral Cherubini's *Requiem* (written for the burial of Louis XVIII) was performed, and Cherubini spoke part of the usual oration. "Who did not admire his genius? (he said). My sorrow is unutterable. I have lost a friend and a brother." Boieldieu was in fact one of the most lovable of men, generous and affectionate. In spite of his successes he was humble, timid even, absolutely without vanity. Boieldieu had been appointed among the earliest professors at the Conservatoire, which was open soon after he came to Paris. At that time he was about the same age as his pupils and treated them as comrades, playing over his own compo-

sitions to them and working out with them the difficulties and problems he met with in expressing his ideas. Probably this method was more inspiring than the ordinary routine of teachers at the Conservatoire; he detested pedantry and was always young with his pupils even in late years, teaching them less thorough workmanship than Cherubini, perhaps, but inspiring them with enthusiasm.

Although Boieldieu composed quickly and with ease, he worked very hard and was a keen critic of his own compositions. His score was carefully revised, full of alterations and pasted over with pieces of paper containing "after-thoughts." His music, without great depth or originality, was melodious, graceful, tender, yet with sparkle and *entrain*; he was essentially a lyric composer, an embodiment of the genius of French light opera. M. Bruneau says that Boieldieu and Hérold, the composers immediately preceding the Romantic movement, aimed before all things at an art which should be pleasing. Partly as a consequence, a reaction from the terrible years through which France had passed, people wished to forget the furious shouts, the serious strains of revolutionary "Chants," and welcomed mild, graceful, melodious music even when illustrating desperate situations.

## WORKS BY BOIELDIEU

*Operas*

1793. La fille coupable.  
1795. Rosalie et Mirza.  
1797. La famille Suisse.  
L'heureuse nouvelle.  
Le pari.  
1798. Zoraïme et Zulnare.  
La dot de Suzette.  
1799. Les méprises espagnoles.  
Emma ou la prisonnière.  
1800. Beniowski.  
Le Calife de Bagdad.  
1803. Ma tante Aurore.  
Le baiser et la quittance.  
1804. Aline reine de Golconde.  
Amour et mystère.  
Abderkhan.  
Un tour de soubrette.  
1805. La jeune femme colère.  
1806. Télémaque.  
1808. Les voitures versées.  
1810. Rien de trop.  
1812. Jean de Paris.  
1813. Le nouveau seigneur du village.  
1814. Bayard à Mézières.  
Le Béarnais.  
Angela.

1816. La fête du village voisin.  
Charles de France.  
1818. Le petit chaperon rouge.  
1821. Blanche de Provence.  
1823. La France et l'Espagne (intermezzo).  
1829. Les deux Nuits.  
1831. La Marquise de Brinvilliers (collaboration).

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